

William Shakespeare



MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING



Dr. Beryl Rowland, *Introduction* / Lucy M. Fitzpatrick, *Notes*

William Shakespeare



TO THE READER

THIS FIGURE, THAT THOU HERE SEEST PUT,
IT WAS FOR GENTLE SHAKESPEARE CUT;
WHEREIN THE GRAVER HAD A STRIFE
WITH NATURE, TO OUT-DO THE LIFE:
O, COULD HE BUT HAVE DRAWN HIS WIT
AS WELL IN BRASS, AS HE HATH HIT
HIS FACE; THE PRINT WOULD THEN SURPASS
ALL, THAT WAS EVER WRIT IN BRASS.
BUT, SINCE HE CANNOT, READER, LOOK,
NOT ON HIS PICTURE, BUT HIS BOOK.

BEN: JONSON.

The Mediaeval view of man was generally not an exalted one. It saw him as more or less depraved, fallen from Grace as a result of Adam's sin; and the things of this world as of little value in terms of his salvation. Natural life was thought of mainly as a preparation for man's entry into Eternity. But Renaissance thought soon began to rehabilitate man and nature. Without denying man's need for Grace, men came gradually to accept the idea that there were "goods," values, "innocent delights" to be had in the world here and now. Man himself was seen no longer as wholly vile and depraved, incapable even of desiring goodness, but rather as Shakespeare saw him in *Hamlet*:

*"What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason!
how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how
express and admirable! in action how like an angel!
in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world!
the paragon of animals!"*

It was, indeed, a very stirring time to be alive in. It was a time like spring, when promise, opportunity, challenge, and growth appeared where none had been dreamed of before. Perhaps this is why there is so much poetry of springtime in the age of Shakespeare.

Edited with Introduction and Suggestions for Study by Dr. Beryl Row

Notes Edited by Lucy Mabry Fitzpatrick



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AIRMONT SHAKESPEARE CLASSICS SERIES

Much Ado About Nothing

By

**William
Shakespeare**

General Introduction by Dr. David G. Pitt



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William Shakespeare: His Life, Times, and Theatre

HIS LIFE

The world's greatest poet and playwright, often called the greatest Englishman, was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, in the year 1564. The exact date of his birth is uncertain, but an entry in the *Stratford Parish Register* gives his baptismal date as April 26, and it is reasonable to assume that he was born on or about April 23—an appropriate day, being the feast of St. George, the patron saint of England.

His father, John Shakespeare, was a glover and dealer in wool and farm products, who had moved to Stratford from Snitterfield, four miles distant, some time before 1552. During his early years in Stratford his business prospered, enabling him to acquire substantial property, including several houses, and to take his place among the more considerable citizens of the town. In 1557 he married Mary, daughter of Robert Arden, a wealthy landowner of Wilmcote, not far from Stratford. Two daughters were born to them before William's birth—Joan, baptized in 1558, and Margaret, baptized in 1562—but both died in infancy. William was thus their third child, though the eldest of those who survived infancy. After him were born Gilbert (1566), another Joan (1569), Anne (1571), Richard (1574), and Edmund (1580).

Very little is positively known about Shakespeare's boyhood and education. We know that for some years after William's birth his father's rise in Stratford society and municipal affairs continued. Many local offices came to him in rapid succession: ale-taster, burgess (a kind of constable), assessor of fines, chamberlain (town treasurer), high bailiff (a kind of magistrate), alderman (town councilor), and chief alderman in 1571. As the son of a man of such eminence, Shakespeare undoubtedly attended the local Grammar School. This he was entitled to do free of charge, his father being a town councilor. We do not know how good a pupil he was nor what subjects he studied. It is probable that he covered the usual Elizabethan curriculum: an "A B C book," the catechism in Latin and English, Latin grammar, the translation of Latin authors, and perhaps some Greek grammar and translation as well. But family circumstances appear to have curtailed his formal education, for shortly before William reached his fourteenth birthday his father's rising fortunes abruptly passed their zenith.

About the year 1578, having gone heavily into debt, John Shakespeare lost two large farms inherited by his wife from her father. Thereafter, he was involved in a series of law-suits, and lost his post on the Stratford town council. Finally, in 1586, he was declared a bankrupt.

In 1582, Shakespeare married Anne, daughter of Richard Hathaway (recently deceased) of the village of Shottery near Stratford. The *Episcopal Register* for the Diocese of Worcester contains their marriage record, dated November 28, 1582; he was then in his eighteenth year and his wife in her twenty-sixth. On May 26 of the following year the *Stratford Parish Register* recorded the baptism of their first child, Susanna; and on February 2, 1585, the baptism of a twin son and daughter named Hamnet and Judith.

How Shakespeare supported his family, how long he continued to live in Stratford, we do not know for certain. Tradition and conjecture have bestowed on him many interim occupations between his marriage and his appearance in London in the early fifteen-nineties: printer, dyer, traveling player; butcher, soldier, apothecary, thief. Perhaps only the last-named "pursuit" requires some explanation. According to several accounts, Shakespeare fell into bad company some time after his marriage, and on several occasions stole deer from the park of Sir Thomas Lucy, a substantial gentleman of Charlecote, near Stratford.

However he may have occupied himself in the interim, we know that by 1592 Shakespeare was already a budding actor and playwright in London. In that year Robert Greene in his autobiographical pamphlet *A Groatsworth of Wit*, referring to the young actors and menders of old plays who were, it seemed to him, gaining undeserved glory from the labours of their betters (both by acting their plays and by rewriting them), wrote as follows:

Yes trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers heart, wrapt in a Players hyde, supposes he is as well able to bombast out blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes factotum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shakescene in a countrey.

"Shakescene" is clearly Shakespeare. The phrase "upstart Crow" probably refers to his country origins and his lack of university education. "Beautified with our feathers" probably means that he uses the older playwrights' words for his own aggrandisement either in plays in which he acts or in those he writes himself. "Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hyde" is a parody of a line in *III Henry VI*, one of the earliest plays ascribed to Shakespeare. And the Latin phrase *Johannes*

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factotum, meaning Jack-of-all-trades, suggests that he was at this time engaged in all sorts of theatrical jobs: actor, poet, playwright, and perhaps manager as well.

Greene died shortly after making this scurrilous attack on the young upstart from Stratford, and so escaped the resentment of those he had insulted. But Henry Chettle, who had prepared Greene's manuscript for the printer, in his *Kind-Harts Dreame* (1592), apologized to Shakespeare for his share in the offence:

I am as sory as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because my selfe have scene his demeanor no lesse civill, than he excelent in the qualitie he professes: Besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approoves his Art.

Thus, because of an attack upon him by an irascible dying man, we learn that Shakespeare at this time was held in high regard by "divers of worship," that is, by many of high birth, as an upright, honest young man of pleasant manners and manifest skill as actor, poet, and playwright.

Although Shakespeare by 1593 had written, or written parts of, some five or six plays (I, II, and III *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and perhaps *Titus Andronicus*), it was as a non-dramatic poet that he first appeared in print. *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, long narrative poems, both bearing Shakespeare's name, were published in 1593 and 1594 respectively. But thereafter for the next twenty years he wrote almost nothing but drama. In his early period, 1591 to 1596, in addition to the plays named above, he wrote *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard II*, and *King John*. Then followed his great middle period, 1596 to 1600, during which he wrote both comedies and history-plays: *The Merchant of Venice*, I and II *Henry IV*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*. The period of his great tragedies and the so-called "dark comedies" followed (1600-1608): *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Coriolanus*. The last phase of his career as dramatist, 1608 to 1613, sometimes called "the period of the romances," produced *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, parts of *Henry VIII*, and perhaps parts of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Long before his death in 1616 his name held such magic for the public, that

merely to print it on the title page of any play assured its popular acclaim. The "upstart Crow" had come a long way since 1592.

He had come a long way, too, from the economic straits that may well have driven him to London many years before. We know, for example, from the records of tax assessments that by 1596 Shakespeare was already fairly well-to-do. This is further borne out by his purchasing in the following year a substantial house known as New Place and an acre of land in Stratford for £60, a sizable sum in those days. In 1602 he made a further purchase of 107 acres at Stratford for £320, and a cottage and more land behind his estate at New Place. But his life during this time was not quite unclouded. His only son, Hamnet, died in 1596 at the age of eleven years, his father in 1601, and his mother in 1608. More happily he saw, in 1607, the marriage of his daughter Susanna to Dr. John Hall, an eminent physician of Stratford, and, in the following year, the baptism of his granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall.

Shakespeare's retirement to Stratford appears to have been gradual, but by 1613 he seems to have settled there, though he still went up to London occasionally. Of the last months of his life we know little. We do know that in February, 1616, his second daughter, Judith, married Thomas Quiney. We know that on March 25 Shakespeare revised and signed his will, among other bequests leaving to his wife his "second best bed with the furniture." A month later he was dead, dying on his fifty-second birthday, April 23, 1616. He was buried in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church, Stratford, on April 26.

HIS TIMES

Shakespeare lived during the English Renaissance, that age of transition that links the Mediaeval and the Modern world. Inheriting the rich traditions of the Middle Ages in art, learning, religion, and politics, rediscovering the great legacies of classical culture, the men of the Renaissance went on to new and magnificent achievements in every phase of human endeavor. No other period in history saw such varied and prolific development and expansion. And the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), Shakespeare's age, was the High Renaissance in England.

The universe grew in immensity as men gradually abandoned the old Ptolemaic view of a finite, earth-centered universe, accepting the enormous intellectual challenge of the illimitable cosmos of Copernicus' theory and Galileo's telescope. The earth enlarged, too, as more of its surface was discovered and charted by explorers following the lead of Columbus, Cabot, Magellan, and Vespucci. England itself

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expanded as explorers and colonizers, such as Frobisher, Davis, Gilbert, Raleigh, Grenville, Drake, and others, carried the English flag into many distant lands and seas; as English trade and commerce expanded with the opening of new markets and new sources of supply; as English sea power grew to protect the trading routes and fend off rivals, particularly Spain, the defeat of whose Invincible Armada in 1588 greatly advanced English national pride at home, and power and prestige abroad.

The world of ideas changed and expanded, too. The re-discovery and reinterpretation of the classics gave a new direction and impetus to secular education. During the Middle Ages theology had dominated education, but now the language, literature, and philosophy of the ancient world, the practical arts of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and training in morals, manners, and gymnastics assumed the major roles in both school and university—in other words, an education that fitted one for the life in the world here and now, replaced one that looked rather to the life hereafter.

The Mediaeval view of man was generally not an exalted one. It saw him as more or less depraved, fallen from Grace as a result of Adam's sin; and the things of this world, which was also "fallen," as of little value in terms of his salvation. Natural life was thought of mainly as a preparation for man's entry into Eternity. But Renaissance thought soon began to rehabilitate man, nature, and the things of this life. Without denying man's need for Grace and the value of the means of salvation provided by the Church, men came gradually to accept the idea that there were "goods," values, "innocent delights" to be had in the world here and now, and that God had given them for man to enjoy. Man himself was seen no longer as wholly vile and depraved, incapable even of desiring goodness, but rather as Shakespeare saw him in *Hamlet*:

What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!

And this is the conception of man that permeates Elizabethan thought and literature. It does not mean that man is incorruptible, immune to moral weakness and folly. Shakespeare has his villains, cowards, and fools. But Nature framed him for greatness, endowed him with vast capacities for knowledge, achievement, and delight, and with aspirations that may take him to the stars. "O brave new world, That has such people in 't!"

HIS THEATRE

There were many theatres, or playhouses, in Shakespeare's London. The first was built in 1576 by James Burbage and was called the *Theatre*. It was built like an arena, with a movable platform at one end, and had no seats in the pit, but had benches in the galleries that surrounded it. It was built of wood, and cost about £200. Other famous playhouses of Shakespeare's time included the Curtain, the Bull, the Rose, the Swan, the Fortune, and, most famous of them all, the Globe. It was built in 1599 by the sons of James Burbage, and it was here that most of Shakespeare's plays were performed.

As its name suggests, the Globe was a circular structure (the second Globe, built in 1614 after the first burned down, was octagonal), and was open to the sky, somewhat like a modern football or baseball stadium, though much smaller. It had three tiers of galleries surrounding the central "yard" or pit, and a narrow roof over the top gallery. But most interesting from our viewpoint was the stage—or rather *stages*—which was very different from that of most modern theatres.

The main stage, or *apron* as it was called, jutted well out into the pit, and did not extend all the way across from side to side. There was an area on either side for patrons to sit or stand in, so that actors performing on the apron could be viewed from three sides instead of one. In addition, there was an inner stage, a narrow rectangular recess let into the wall behind the main stage. When not in use it could be closed by a curtain drawn across in front; when open it could be used for interior scenes, arbor scenes, tomb and anteroom scenes and the like. On either side of this inner stage were doors through which the main stage was entered. Besides the inner and outer stages, there were no fewer than four other areas where the action of the play, or parts of it, might be performed. Immediately above the inner stage, and corresponding to it in size and shape, was another room with its front exposed. This was used for upstairs scenes, or for storage when not otherwise in use. In front of this was a narrow railed gallery, which could be used for balcony scenes, or those requiring the walls of a castle or the ramparts of a fortress. On either side of it and on the same level was a window-stage, so-called because it consisted of a small balcony enclosed by windows that opened on hinges. This permitted actors to speak from the open windows to others on the main stage below. In all, it was a very versatile multiple stage and gave the dramatist and producer much more freedom in staging than most modern theatres afford.

The dramatist's words and the imagination of the audi-

ence supplied the lack of scenery. No special lighting effects were possible since plays were performed in the daylight that streamed in through the unroofed top of the three-tiered enclosure that was the playhouse. Usually a few standard stage props were on hand: trestles and boards to form a table, benches and chairs, flagons, an altar, artificial trees, weapons, a man's severed head, and a few other items. Costumes were usually elaborate, though no attempt was made to reproduce the dress of the time and place portrayed in the play.

But we need have no doubts about the audience's response. They came, they saw, and the dramatist conquered, for they kept coming back for more and more. And despite the opposition that the theatre encountered from Puritans and others, who thought it the instrument of Satan, the theatre in Shakespeare's time flourished as one of the supreme glories of a glorious age.

—DAVID G. PITT
Memorial University of Newfoundland

INTRODUCTION TO *Much Ado About Nothing*

DATE AND SOURCE

Much Ado About Nothing was written about 1598-9. It is an exuberant lighthearted work concerning itself, as do Shakespeare's early and mature comedies in general, with the nature of the experience of love. It is perhaps, of all Shakespeare's comedies, the most acceptable to modern taste because the spirit of the love relationship between Beatrice and Benedick is modern. It is also a play of wit, and is therefore more taxing than is often allowed. George Bernard Shaw remarked of *Much Ado About Nothing* that, "like all Shakespeare's comedies it contains nothing beyond the capacity of a child, except the indecencies of its badinage." It is true that the plot is simple, but the badinage demands verbal perception and mental dexterity. It is, in fact, a play for the culturally sophisticated.

Even the title may serve as a warning. The Elizabethans did not always make such a clear distinction between "t" and "th" as we do to-day. In the orchard scene when Balthasar sings, there appears to be a pun on *noting* and *nothing*. Balthasar says: "Note this before my notes—There's not a note of mine that's worth the noting." Don Pedro replies: "Why, these are very crotchets [i.e. "eccentric ideas" or "quarter notes in music"] that he speaks; "Note, notes, forsooth, and nothing!" This pun may be implied in the title. In this play there may be much ado about nothing, but the activity, however spurious, is the result of *noting*: Beatrice and Benedick become lovers through noting what others say about them; Claudio suspects Hero because of what he notes; and the plot is discovered through the noting of the watchman. The play ends with the notes of a dance.

Nearly all great dramatists borrow their plots, and Shakespeare is no exception. The story of the maiden falsely accused is a very old one. In the sixteenth century it was popularized by Matteo Bandello in his *Nouvella* (1554), and

by Ariosto in the *Orlando Furioso*. Bandello's version was known in England both in the original Italian and in the French of Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* (1569); Ariosto's version was retold by Peter Beverley as the *Historie of Ariodanto and Ieneura* (1566) and by Spenser in the *Faerie Queene* (1590). Richard Mulcaster presented a play called *A Historie of Ariodante and Geneuora* before the Queen in 1583, and Ariosto's version was translated into English in 1591.

But these sources account for little more than sensational elements of the plot and even here Shakespeare makes modifications. In Bandello's tale, the motive for the accusation of immortality is the disappointment of another lover, and when the accuser believes he has caused her death, he confesses his villainy. Shakespeare creates his own villain whose actions are prompted by malice and jealousy. He also shifts the focus of the story. He makes it serve as a foil for the warm, irrepressible courtship of lively, fallible characters of his own creation, whose dialogue examines, in comic yet penetrating fashion, serious questions of courtship, love, and marriage. Melodrama is minimized and the two love affairs reach contrasting climaxes in the same scene, with Hero's tragedy serving to break down the reserve which has kept Beatrice and Benedick apart.

Shakespeare also provides a comic element of another dimension which not only assists in the plot but contrasts with the emotional tensions of the Hero-Claudio situation and the merry skirmishings of the Beatrice and Benedick wooing. Into the exotic Sicilian city, he audaciously introduces an English village constable and his Watch, stupid but kindly men who, for all their humorous ineptitude, succeed in doing their duty and exposing villainy.

THE STORY

In this comedy two plots are interwoven, the story of Claudio and Hero, and that of Benedick and Beatrice. It is in three movements: the development of the love-relationship between the two couples; the stratagem whereby Claudio, on the eve of his wedding, is made to believe that Hero is unfaithful to him; the unmasking of the villain of the plot with

the restoration of Hero to Claudio and the uniting of Beatrice and Benedick.

It is set in Messina, where the Governor Leonato welcomes Don Pedro, Prince of Arragon, and his Italian troops returning after a victorious campaign. One of Pedro's favorites, Claudio, wishes to marry Leonato's daughter, Hero; another, Benedick, asserts rather too vehemently that he does *not* wish to marry Leonato's spirited niece, Beatrice. Through the good offices of Don Pedro, Claudio's marriage to Hero is fixed for seven days hence. To amuse itself until then, the company lightheartedly tries to persuade Beatrice and Benedick that their militant relationship conceals the most passionate affection.

Meanwhile, a "plain-dealing villain," Don John, and his follower, Borachio, plan to thwart the marriage through sheer malice and envy of Claudio. Borachio arranges for Hero's gentlewoman, Margaret, to talk to him at night from Hero's window. Don John apprizes Don Pedro and Claudio to watch. They are convinced that Hero is immoral and, at her wedding, denounce her.

Ironically, the plot has already been discovered by the watchmen, but the constable and his assistant are so full of their own importance that they fail to disclose their information in time. Hero faints at the accusation and the kindly Friar who was to have married her reports that she is dead, hoping that by so doing he may more easily discover the truth of the situation. Brought close together by the tragedy, Beatrice and Benedick acknowledge their love and Benedick promises to kill Claudio for the wrong he has done to Hero. Fortunately, the action is not necessary. Borachio confesses his guilt. Don John flees and Claudio, stricken with remorse, agrees to marry Leonato's niece. After an expiation ceremony at Hero's "tomb," the ladies at Leonato's household appear veiled. Claudio swears to marry the lady proffered him, and to his astonishment he finds he is reunited with Hero. The play ends with the promise of a double wedding, news of the arrest of Don John, and dancing to the music of the pipes.

The Hero-Claudio story was well-known to the Elizabethans, and Shakespeare appears to assume that his audience was familiar with it. His plot has obvious weaknesses: not

only is the proxy wooing complication curtailed too soon to be effective but the unchastity story lacks conviction. Without investigating, a lover, seeing, as he supposes, his beloved talking with a man at her window after midnight, denounces her on the grounds that "she knows the heat of a luxurious bed." The gentlewoman who impersonates her mistress does not even realize that she has done any harm, even though her mistress is publicly disgraced the next morning. Shakespeare slides away from explanations. He minimizes the melodramatic elements, conventionalizes the young couple involved in them, and emphasizes, instead, the very plausible courtship of two lively lovers in such a way as to make them immortal.

THE CHARACTER GROUPINGS

Beatrice and Benedick are Shakespeare's own creations, and it is they who give the play its lasting vitality. Beatrice is the most sparkling of all Shakespeare's heroines. It is her spirit which holds the play together. Intelligent, witty, independent, she has a vitality and joy which, we would agree with her, seems to be innate. For if she was not born in a merry hour, certainly, as she herself says, "a star danced, and under that was I born" (II,i). It is because she responds so vigorously to life, because she is so confident of the generous rightness of her actions that she spars with Benedick, recognizing that this attractive but assertive young man might well threaten her personality if she succumbs to him without terms. Interestingly enough, Shakespeare resists the typically male impulse to make her surrender. It is, rather, Benedick who bends to her, and having been verbally outsmarted, finally resorts to stopping her mouth with a kiss.

Yet at time of crisis, Benedick proves to be calm, shrewd, and strong. He stays at the scene of catastrophe when others leave. His declaration of love is simple and touching: "I do love nothing in the world so well as you." Although he couches his disapproval in his customary, erudite wit, he shows that he will not reconcile himself easily to Claudio, despite Claudio's contrition (V,iv). Finally, with the social aplomb which he has demonstrated even in the sharpest situa-

tion, he, rather than the Duke, concludes the arrangements and calls for music.

In contrast, the other pair of lovers seem conventional figures, enlivened only by the dramatic roles in which they find themselves. Claudio is the correct young man, the executive type, who wants to marry right. His first question is illuminating: "Hath Leonato any son, my lord?" To discover that Hero is an only child and therefore an heiress must have been satisfactory to him. Content to allow Don Pedro to do his wooing for him, he does not react as the vigorous lover when he is led to suspect that Don Pedro is in fact wooing on his own behalf. His control of his emotions prepares us for his subsequent reaction to the slander of his lady. His contemptuous denunciation of her at the altar is cruelly premeditated, and later, when he believes that she is dead, he can joke at the indignation and distress of her father and uncle (V,i).

Hero's mildness is a contrast to Beatrice's exuberance. At her betrothal she says nothing and leaves Beatrice to interpret: "My cousin tells him in his ear that she is in his heart." Shakespeare never leaves Hero alone with Claudio. She is the epitome of modesty and docility, with just enough sparkle in her to take part in the matchmaking plot upon Beatrice, if it be "any modest office" (II,i). The gulling scene gives Hero her one opportunity for critical and lively comment:

Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Mispraising what they look on; and her wit
Values itself so highly, that to her
All matter else seems weak: she cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endear'd. (III,i, p. 59)

But "gentle" Hero, as Don Pedro calls her, cannot sustain a harsh role. In her anxious forebodings before her marriage and in her anguished rebuttal at the church, she comes close to being a tragic figure, an anticipation of a later heroine of true tragic stature, Desdemona.

Another grouping in the play has contributed much to its popularity. Shakespeare's English clowns bring sanity and

realism to the melodramatic elements of the plot. Their presence gives a sense of stability which is rooted in the English village. The humor occasioned by Dogberry, Verges, and their assistants lies largely in their ignorance of their duties. Yet Shakespeare deliberately employs such obvious fools as these to resolve unwittingly the play's major crisis. The scenes are rich in comic perception: the Watch's appearance and drill approach farce; the trial scene parodies in detail accepted legal procedure. The worthy constable, despite the honesty of his intentions, almost subverts justice by his pomposity and muddle-headedness, and he denies the most sacred premise of British law by declaring a man guilty before proven (IV,ii). Appropriately, it is Dogberry's capacity for distorting meanings of words which leads to near-tragedy. In this respect, he provides a sharp contrast to the witty pair of lovers who misuse words with such imaginative skill. It is robust humor, rooted in the earth of the English countryside.

Of the senior figures, Don Pedro and Leonato have dominant roles. The Prince is adroit and sophisticated, at ease with his officers and gracious to the ladies, with his talk spiced with wit. He is on his dignity with Don John, and although he initially questions the slander, he supports his lieutenant Claudio even to the point of vengeance (III,ii). He is of course, Leonato's superior although he is younger. But in the scene where the injured brothers tackle Claudio and Don Pedro, Don Pedro behaves with dignity and firmness, without displaying Claudio's subsequent lightheartedness.

Leonato, an elderly gentleman appreciating high company, shares in the general wit and sophistication. Impatient as he is with Dogberry and Verges, he is nevertheless kindly, saying, as he dismisses them to go to the wedding, "Drink some wine ere you go" (III,v). It is not surprising that this urbane and worthy gentleman should jump to an obvious conclusion when his daughter is accused of being unchaste:

Dear my lord, if you, in your own proof,
Have vanquisht the resistance of her youth,
And made defeat of her virginity . . .

(IV,i, p. 87)

Nor is it unexpected that in the same scene he should

accept the apparent proof and indulge in recriminations and self-pity. In his distress, he retains dignity and shows courage in his challenging of Claudio. His subsequent role in which he gives the contrite Claudio another chance to marry his daughter is restrained and somewhat artificial. In a slighter role, his brother Antonio shows similar good sense and humanity.

Among the minor characters, Don John dominates. He finds everywhere "food to my displeasure" (I,iii), dislikes everyone, and says he could poison the lot. He has previously resisted his brother Don Pedro unsuccessfully, (I,iii) and he is thoroughly soured. Borachio, who assists him, is an adventurer with a zest for intrigue. He is apparently not without his attractions to women, is perceptive even when drunk (III,iii), and finally makes a very frank confession. Conrade seems to be the more prudent of the two. He offers Don John advice to dissemble (I,iii). He is not drunk when arrested and he behaves with more indignation.

Margaret, who helps to slander Hero, is innocent and flighty. Shakespeare has difficulty in preserving her innocence. She is ignorant of the plot, yet she wears Hero's clothes, impersonates her at her window, and is apparently able to forget the entire episode even when her mistress is disgraced by it. The presence of the Friar gives comfort to the audience as well as to Hero. In the turmoil of emotions, his plan of assumed mourning is given with clarity, and he impresses one as a man of humanity and good sense.

That Shakespeare's wittiest comedy should be largely in prose is not accidental. Prose here is chiefly the intellectual language, verse the emotional. We are hardly conscious of the medium used, but through it our emotions are skillfully manipulated, aroused or relaxed, according to the demands of the action. The prose, tense and economical, provides the utmost opportunity for prompt repartee. Its vitality impresses upon us that this is where the action is; the ancient tale of a maiden wronged becomes merely a burden to a spirited modern wooing and the fumbblings of parochial officials.

What we see and hear is life, presented to us dramatically through the natural *rubato* of conversation. It is when the play comes close to tragedy that we have passionate, rhetorical

verse. The church scene, for example, begins quietly in prose. The transition is made effectively with the assistance of a powerful homely image: when Claudio launches into his tirade: "Give not this rotten orange to your friend," the effect is of violent shock, preparing us for the more formal language to follow. Again, the language of Leonato in his grief is heightened to emphasize the tragic aspect:

O, one too much by thee! Why had I one?
Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?
Why had I not with charitable hand
Took up a beggar's issue at my gates,
Who smirched thus and mired with infamy,
I might have said, 'No part of it is mine;
This shame derives itself from unknown loins'?
But mine, and mine I loved, and mine I praised,
And mine that I was proud on; mine so much
That I myself was to myself not mine,
Valuing of her; why, she—O, she is fall'n
Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea
Hath drops too few to wash her clean again,
And salt too little which may season give
To her foul-tainted flesh! (IV,i, pp. 91-92)

It does not move us any more than Claudio's speech did. Claudio declaims and denounces on the flimsiest of evidence; Leonato's lamentations are, we know, unnecessary. It is language appropriate to the situation, with Shakespeare's *l'èger de main* making us accept the tragic aspect. But the real excellence of *Much Ado About Nothing* comes through in its prose.

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STUDY QUESTIONS

ACT I

1. What is the *mood* of the opening? What effect does the appearance of the "reconciled" Don John have in the first scene?
2. What is the functional effect of the preparations and rumor in scene ii, apart from heightening the illusion of passing events?
3. Don John's malice is often associated with sickness and poison. What are some of the images used?
4. Our first impressions of Claudio before he appears on stage set him in direct contrast to Benedick. How does Shakespeare achieve this impression?
5. How does the Duke's proposal illuminate character?
6. What are some of the essential elements of the "merry warfare" between Beatrice and Benedick?
7. How does the discussion between Don Pedro, Claudio, and Benedick on matrimony increase our interest in Benedick and provide ironic foreshadowing?
8. Examine the use of prose and verse in the first Act. What is the effect of the transition in the first scene?

ACT II

1. How does Don John's strategy and its effect on Claudio prepare us for the subsequent major action?
2. What light does the exchange between Don Pedro and Beatrice throw on Beatrice's character?
3. How does the plan to dupe Beatrice and Benedick arise naturally from the circumstances?
4. Compare the way in which the plot against Hero is hatched with that in which the stratagem against the two lovers is planned by the festive court.
5. How does Shakespeare insure that the duping of Benedick is lighthearted rather than malicious, and enable Benedick to retain the affection of the audience?

ACT III

1. What are the major differences between the hoax on Beatrice and that on Benedick?
2. Why should Shakespeare choose to make the second matchmaking scene shorter and to alter the tone?
3. How does Shakespeare make us move from a world of gaiety and non-responsibility to a world of darkness and intrigue, and what language does he use to emphasize the transition?
4. How does the world of Dogberry balance that of Don John?
5. How does Shakespeare use the clumsiness of the Watch to enhance the speculative tension of the audience?
6. What is the effect of placing the comic arrest before the scene in which evil triumphs?
7. In what way does the short scene early in the morning of Hero's wedding day enhance our sympathy for the heroine?
8. In the last scene of the act how are the comic threads finally interwoven with the main plot, and how does Shakespeare maintain the tension of the audience?

ACT IV

1. What descriptive elements in the church scene enhance the feeling of decorum and solemnity?
2. What are the qualities in Claudio's speech that make its impact so violent?
3. What are the reactions of Beatrice and Benedick?
4. What irony is there in the opening scene?
5. How do characterization and play on words contribute to the humor of the trial scene?
6. The opening scene begins in prose, then launches into verse. What is the effect of the transition?
7. How does the scene at the church add to our knowledge of the characters of Leonato and Claudio?
8. How does Shakespeare establish the closest possible association between his happier pair of lovers and the dramatic event which they have witnessed?
9. By what means is Beatrice's injunction: "Kill Claudio," made dramatically convincing?

ACT V

1. What is Shakespeare's intention in making Leonato and Antonio challenge Claudio and Don Pedro to a duel? Is he enhancing the mood of tragedy or is he suggesting the humorous effect of two old gentlemen, unhinged by grief, behaving preposterously?
2. How do Don Pedro's lyrical lines at Hero's "tomb" indicate that an important turning point in the action has arrived?
3. What images of darkness and light point to the end of mourning and the beginning of a new life?
4. How are the "flytings" of Beatrice and Benedick effectively brought to an end, and what effect does this action have upon the tone?
5. How might the final dance be said to resolve the play, with all masks laid aside and order restored?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. In this play Shakespeare submits certain briefly created types to the disciplinary experiences of love. What are these types and what educative effect does love have upon them?
2. Consider whether the story of the betrothal of Hero and Claudio exists mainly to give life to Beatrice and Benedick, enabling us to see their experience in a proper perspective.
3. "She speaks poniards, and every word stabs." Analyze the verbal attack of Beatrice on Benedick and cite instances of her wounding skill.
4. Coleridge remarked that the interest in the plot is on account of the characters. Give your reasons for either agreeing or disagreeing with his observations.
5. Compare the wordplay of Beatrice and Benedick with that of Dogberry and Verges. How are these verbal exchanges made to illuminate character?
6. The play moves from gaiety to woe to happiness. What are the major steps in these transitions, and what is the final attitude toward evil averted?
7. How do Dogberry's blunderings in words and actions caricature the various kinds of blindness in the rest of the play?
8. Consider the various elements of *illusion* in the play. How does the masked dance adumbrate a sequence of deceptions in which characters wear masks or see others with masks?

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

DON PEDRO, *prince of Arragon.*

DON JOHN, *his bastard brother.*

CLAUDIO, *a young lord of Florence.*

BENEDICK, *a young lord of Padua.*

LEONATO, *governor of Messina.*

ANTONIO, *his brother.*

BALTHAZAR, *attendant on Don Pedro.*

BORACHIO, } *followers of Don John.*
CONRADE, }

FRIAR FRANCIS.

DOGBERRY, *a constable.*

VERGES, *a headborough.*

A SEXTON.

A BOY.

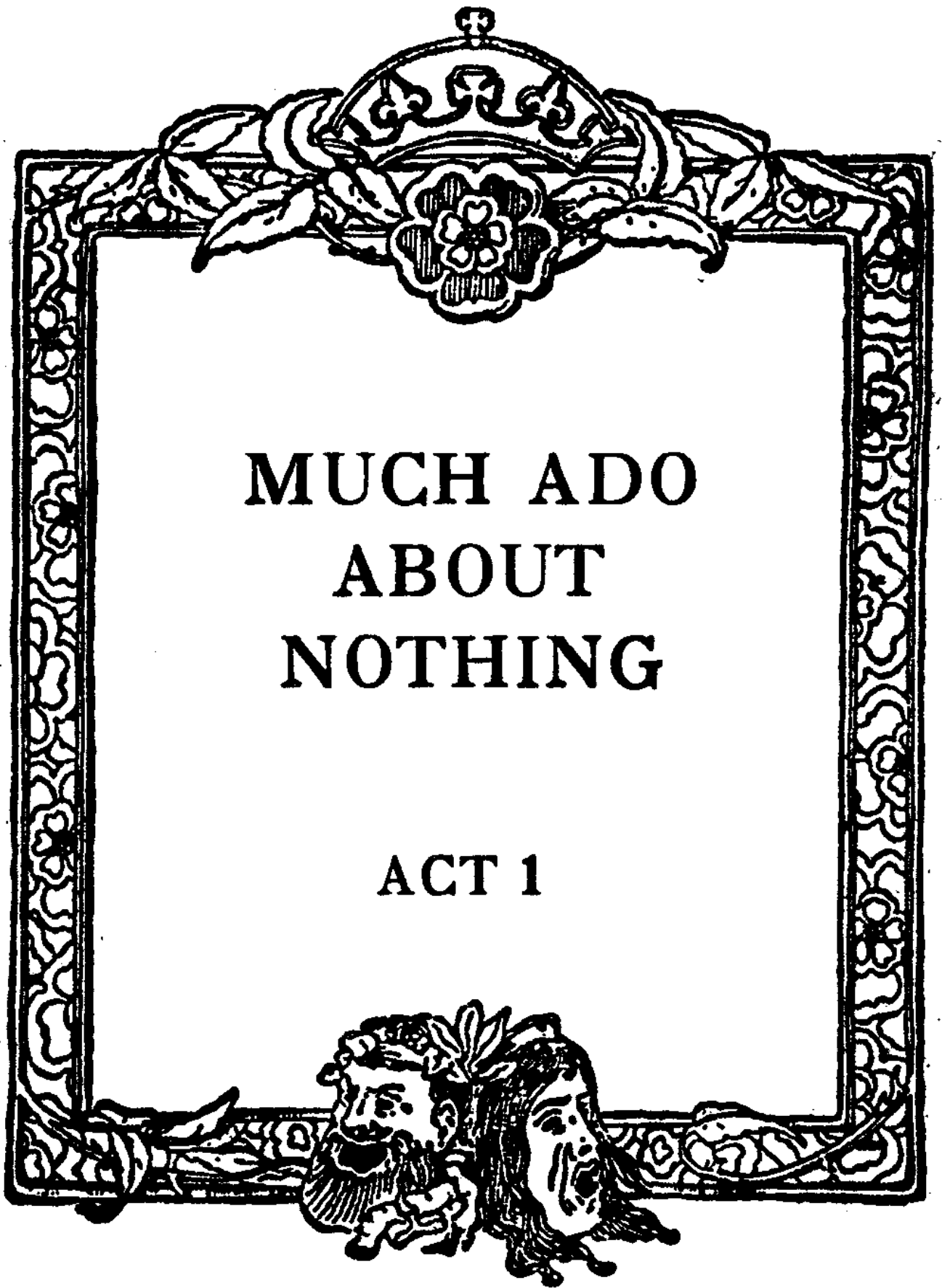
HERO, *daughter to Leonato.*

BEATRICE, *niece to Leonato.*

MARGARET, } *gentlewomen attending on Hero.*
URSULA, }

MESSENGERS, WATCH, ATTENDANTS, &c.

SCENE—*Messina.*



**MUCH ADO
ABOUT
NOTHING**

ACT 1



ACT I

DON PEDRO, Prince of Arragon and his retinue, make a victorious entry into Messina, where Leonato, the elderly Governor with his daughter, Hero, and his niece, Beatrice, receive them. Verbal warfare breaks out between the spirited, independent Beatrice and Benedick, a young gentleman from Padua, in the Prince's party. Claudio, a Florentine who has played an honorable part in the recent campaign, shows an interest in Hero, but Benedick tries to discourage him from matrimony, maintaining that the bachelor state is preferable. Claudio nevertheless declares to Don Pedro that he loves Leonato's daughter and the Prince undertakes to woo her for him at a masked ball which is to take place that evening. This conversation is overheard but misinterpreted by a servant, and as a result, Leonato is given to understand that Don Pedro is in love with his daughter. It is also overheard and reported accurately by mischief-making Borachio to his master Don John, the Prince's bastard brother, who leads a life of insurrection and intrigue. Don John, maliciously inclined to all Don Pedro's friends, plans to spoil the romance.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Before LEONATO's house.

Enter LEONATO, HERO, and BEATRICE, with a MESSENGER.

LEONATO.

I learn in this letter that Don Pedro of Arragon comes this night to Messina.

MESSENGER.

He is very near by this: he was not three leagues off when I left him.

LEONATO.

How many gentlemen have you lost in this action?

MESSENGER.

But few of any sort,¹ and none of name.²

LEONATO.

A victory is twice itself when the achiever brings home full numbers. I find here that Don Pedro hath bestow'd much honour on a young Florentine called Claudio.

MESSENGER.

Much deserved on his part, and equally remember'd by Don Pedro. He hath borne himself beyond the promise of his age; doing, in the figure of a lamb, the feats of a lion: he hath, indeed, better better'd expectation³ than you must expect of me to tell you how.

¹ sort: rank, or perhaps, kind.

² name: reputation.

³ he . . . better better'd expectation: he has bettered expectation better.

LEONATO.

He hath an uncle here in Messina will be very much glad of it.

MESSENGER.

I have already deliver'd him letters, and there appears much joy in him; even so much, that joy could not show itself modest enough without a badge¹ of bitterness.

LEONATO.

Did he break out into tears?

MESSENGER.

In great measure.²

LEONATO.

A kind³ overflow of kindness: there are no faces truer than those that are so wash'd. How much better is it to weep at joy than to joy at weeping!

BEATRICE.

I pray you, is Signior Mountanto⁴ return'd from the wars or no?

MESSENGER.

I know none of that name, lady: there was none such in the army of any sort.

LEONATO.

What⁵ is he that you ask for, niece?

HERO.

My cousin means Signior Benedick of Padua.

MESSENGER.

O, he's return'd; and as pleasant as ever he was.

BEATRICE.

He set up his bills⁶ here in Messina, and challenged Cupid at the flight;⁷ and my uncle's fool, reading the challenge, subscribed⁸ for Cupid, and challenged him at the birdbolt.⁹—I

¹ badge: distinguishing sign. ² measure: abundance. ³ kind: natural. ⁴ Mountanto: a fencing term—an upright thrust—used by Beatrice to describe Benedick's belligerent disposition. ⁵ What: who. ⁶ set up his bills: posted his challenge. ⁷ flight: an arrow used for great distances. ⁸ subscribed: signed. ⁹ birdbolt: blunt arrow used for shooting rooks.

pray you, how many hath he kill'd and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he kill'd? for, indeed, I promised to eat all of his killing.

LEONATO.

Faith, niece, you tax¹ Signior Benedick too much; but he'll be meet with you,² I doubt it not.

MESSENGER.

He hath done good service, lady, in these wars.

BEATRICE.

You had musty³ victual, and he hath holp⁴ to eat it: he's a very valiant trencher-man;⁵ he hath an excellent stomach.⁶

MESSENGER.

And a good soldier too, lady.

BEATRICE.

And a good soldier to a lady:—but what is he to a lord?

MESSENGER.

A lord to a lord, a man to a man; stuff⁷ with all honourable virtues.

BEATRICE.

It is so, indeed; he is no less than a stuff man: but for the stuffing,—well, we are all mortal.

LEONATO.

You must not, sir, mistake my niece. There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and her: they never meet but there's a skirmish of wit between them.

BEATRICE.

Alas, he gets nothing by that! In our last conflict four of his five wits⁸ went halting⁹ off, and now is the whole man

¹ tax: blame; reproach. ² meet with you: be a match for you; get even with you. ³ musty: sour. ⁴ holp: helped. ⁵ trencher-man: glutton; hearty eater. ⁶ stomach: appetite. ⁷ stuff: fully endowed. ⁸ five wits: to correspond to the five senses; Schmidt says the "proverbial five wits" were "common wit, imagination, fantasy, estimation, memory." ⁹ halting: limping.

govern'd with one: so that if he have wit enough to keep himself warm,¹ let him bear it for a difference² between himself and his horse; for it is all the wealth that he hath left, to be known a reasonable creature.—Who is his companion now? He hath every month a new sworn brother.³

MESSENGER.

Is't possible?

BEATRICE.

Very easily possible: he wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat; it ever changes with the next block.⁴

MESSENGER.

I see, lady, the gentleman is not in your books.⁵

BEATRICE.

No; an⁶ he were, I would burn my study. But, I pray you, who is his companion? Is there no young squarer⁷ now that will make a voyage with him to the devil?

MESSENGER.

He is most in the company of the right noble Claudio.

BEATRICE.

O Lord, he will hang upon him like a disease: he is sooner caught than the pestilence, and the taker runs presently⁸ mad. God help the noble Claudio! if he have caught the Benedick, it will cost him a thousand pound ere a' be cured.

MESSENGER.

I will hold friends⁹ with you, lady.

BEATRICE.

Do, good friend.

¹ to keep himself warm: a proverbial saying, "To have wit enough to keep one's self warm." ² for a difference: as a mark of distinction; *difference* is a term in heraldry. ³ sworn brother: men who took the oath of chivalry to share each other's fortunes were called "sworn brothers." ⁴ block: wooden mold on which hats are shaped. ⁵ not in your books: not in your good graces. ⁶ an: if. ⁷ squarer: quarreler. ⁸ presently: immediately. ⁹ hold friends: stay friends.

LEONATO.

You will never run mad, niece.

BEATRICE.

No, not till a hot January.

MESSENGER.

Don Pedro is approach'd.

Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK
and BALTHAZAR.

DON PEDRO.

Good Signior Leonato, you are come to meet your trouble:
the fashion of the world is to avoid cost, and you encounter it.

LEONATO.

Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your grace:
for trouble being gone, comfort should remain; but when you
depart from me, sorrow abides, and happiness takes his leave.

DON PEDRO.

You embrace your charge¹ too willingly.—I think this is your
daughter.

LEONATO.

Her mother hath many times told me so.

BENEDICK.

Were you in doubt, sir, that you askt her?

LEONATO.

Signior Benedick, no; for then were you a child.

DON PEDRO.

You have it full,² Benedick: we may guess by this what you
are, being a man.—Truly, the lady fathers herself.³—Be
happy, lady; for you are like an honourable father.

BENEDICK.

If Signior Leonato be her father, she would not have his head

¹ charge: burden (of having guests).

² You have it full: you are well answered.

³ father's herself: is like her father.

on her shoulders for all Messina, as like him as she is.

BEATRICE.

I wonder that you will still¹ be talking, Signior Benedick: nobody marks you.

BENEDICK.

What, my dear Lady Disdain! are you yet living?

BEATRICE.

Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet² food to feed it as Signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence.

BENEDICK.

Then is courtesy a turncoat.—But it is certain I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted: and I would I could find it in my heart that I had not a hard heart; for, truly, I love none.

BEATRICE.

A dear happiness³ to women: they would else have been troubled with a pernicious suitor. I thank God and my cold blood, I am of your humour for that.⁴ I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.

BENEDICK.

God keep your ladyship still in that mind! so some gentleman or other shall scape a predestinate⁵ scratcht face.

BEATRICE.

Scratching could not make it worse, an⁶ 'twere such a face as yours were.

BENEDICK.

Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher.

BEATRICE.

A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours.⁷

¹ still: continually.

² meet: suitable.

³ A dear happiness: true good luck.

⁴ for that: that is, with regard to courtship.

⁵ predestinate: predestined; foreordained.

⁶ an: if. ⁷ beast of yours: dumb beast.

BENEDICK.

I would my horse had the speed of your tongue, and so good a continuer.¹ But keep your way, i' God's name; I have done.

BEATRICE.

You always end with a jade's trick:² I know you of old.

DON PEDRO.

This is the sum of all: Leonato,—Signior Claudio and Signior Benedick,—my dear friend Leonato hath invited you all. I tell him we shall stay here at the least a month; and he heartily prays some occasion may detain us longer: I dare swear he is no hypocrite, but prays from his heart.

LEONATO.

If you swear, my lord, you shall not be forsworn.—Let me bid you welcome, my lord: being reconciled³ to the prince your brother, I owe you all duty.⁴

DON JOHN.

I thank you: I am not of many words, but I thank you.

LEONATO.

Please it your Grace lead on?⁵

DON PEDRO.

Your hand, Leonato; we will go together.

[Exeunt all except BENEDICK and CLAUDIO.]

CLAUDIO.

Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?

BENEDICK.

I noted her not; but I lookt on her.

¹ so good a continuer: equal staying power.

² jade's trick: dirty trick; a jade was a vicious horse.

³ being reconciled: since you are now reconciled.

⁴ duty: courtesy.

⁵ Please it your Grace lead on: will it please your Grace to lead the way.

CLAUDIO.

Is she not a modest young lady?

BENEDICK.

Do you question me, as an honest man should do, for my simple true judgement, or would you have me speak after my custom, as being a profest tyrant¹ to their sex?

CLAUDIO.

No; I pray thee speak in sober judgement.

BENEDICK.

Why, i'faith, methinks she's too low² for a high praise, too brown³ for a fair praise, and too little for a great praise: only this commendation I can afford her,—that were she other than she is, she were unhandsome; and being no other but as she is, I do not like her.

CLAUDIO.

Thou think'st I am in sport: I pray thee tell me truly how thou likest her.

BENEDICK.

Would you buy her, that you inquire after her?

CLAUDIO.

Can the world buy such a jewel?

BENEDICK.

Yea, and a case to put it into. But speak you this with a sad⁴ brow? or do you play the flouting Jack,⁵ to tell us Cupid is a good hare-finder, and Vulcan a rare carpenter?⁶ Come, in what key shall a man take you, to go in⁷ the song?

CLAUDIO.

In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I lookt on.

¹ tyrant: a person who shows no mercy. ² low: short in stature.
³ brown: dark. ⁴ sad: serious. ⁵ flouting Jack: mocking knave.
⁶ to tell . . . carpenter: in telling us that blind Cupid is a good hare-finder (requiring keen sight) and that Vulcan (a blacksmith) is a fine carpenter. ⁷ go in: join in.

BENEDICK.

I can see yet without spectacles, and I see no such matter: there's her cousin, an she were not possest with a fury,¹ exceeds her as much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December. But I hope you have no intent to turn husband, have you?

CLAUDIO.

I would scarce trust myself, though I had sworn the contrary, if Hero would be my wife.

BENEDICK.

Is't come to this? In faith, hath not the world one man but he will wear his cap with suspicion?² Shall I never see a bachelor of threescore again? Go to, i'faith; an thou wilt needs thrust thy neck into a yoke, wear the print of it, and sigh away Sundays.³ Look; Don Pedro is return'd to seek you.

Enter DON PEDRO.

DON PEDRO.

What secret hath held you here, that you follow'd not to Leonato's?

BENEDICK.

I would your Grace would constrain me to tell.

DON PEDRO.

I charge thee on thy allegiance.

BENEDICK.

You hear, Count Claudio: I can be secret as a dumb man, I would have you think so; but on my allegiance,—mark you this, on my allegiance.—He is in love. With who?—now that is your Grace's part.—Mark how short his answer is;—With Hero, Leonato's short daughter.

CLAUDIO.

If this were so, so were it utter'd.

¹ fury: bad temper.

² with suspicion: that is, "on account of the horns hidden under it"—Schmidt.

³ sigh away Sundays: either an allusion to the Puritanic observation of Sundays or else a day when a man cannot get away from his wife.

BENEDICK.

Like the old tale,¹ my lord: 'it is not so, nor 'twas not so; but indeed, God forbid it should be so.'

CLAUDIO.

If my passion change not shortly, God forbid it should be otherwise.

DON PEDRO.

Amen, if you love her; for the lady is very well worthy.

CLAUDIO.

You speak this to fetch me in,² my lord.

DON PEDRO.

By my troth, I speak my thought.

CLAUDIO.

And, in faith, my lord, I spoke mine.

BENEDICK.

And, by my two faiths and troths,³ my lord, I spoke mine.

CLAUDIO.

That I love her, I feel.

DON PEDRO.

That she is worthy, I know.

BENEDICK.

That I neither feel how she should be loved, nor know how she should be worthy, is the opinion that fire cannot melt out of me: I will die in it at the stake.

DON PEDRO.

Thou wast ever an obstinate heretic in the despite⁴ of beauty.

CLAUDIO.

And never could maintain his part but in the force of his will.

¹ the old tale: a children's version of the old Bluebeard legend.

² to fetch me in: to trap me into a confession.

³ two faiths and troths: that is, his allegiance to Claudio and Don Pedro.

⁴ the despite: your contempt.

BENEDICK.

That a woman conceived me, I thank her; that she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks: but that I will have a recheat¹ winded in my forehead, or hang my bugle in an invisible baldrick,² all women shall pardon me. Because I will not do them the wrong to mistrust any, I will do myself the right to trust none; and the fine³ is (for the which I may go the finer),⁴ I will live a bachelor.

DON PEDRO.

I shall see thee, ere I die, look pale with love.

BENEDICK.

With anger, with sickness, or with hunger, my lord; not with love: prove that ever I lose more blood with love than I will get again with drinking, pick out mine eyes with a ballet-maker's pen,⁵ and hang me up at the door of a brothel-house for the sign of blind Cupid.⁶

DON PEDRO.

Well, if ever thou dost fall from this faith, thou wilt prove a notable argument.⁷

BENEDICK.

If I do, hang me in a bottle like a cat,⁸ and shoot at me; and he that hits me, let him be clapt on the shoulder, and called Adam.⁹

DON PEDRO.

Well, as time shall try:¹⁰

'In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke.'¹¹

BENEDICK.

The savage bull may; but if ever the sensible Benedick bear it, pluck off the bull's horns, and set them in my forehead;

¹ **recheat**: hunting call on a horn; that is, he will not wear horns on his forehead to proclaim his cuckold state to the world. ² **baldrick**: an ornamental belt worn over the shoulder to support a sword or bugle. ³ **fine**: conclusion. ⁴ **go the finer**: be more finely dressed. ⁵ **ballet-maker's pen**: ballad-maker's pen (a worthless instrument). ⁶ **the sign of . . . Cupid**: the customary sign over a brothel. ⁷ **argument**: subject for talk (satiric). ⁸ **hang . . . cat**: a popular pastime. ⁹ **Adam**: probably Adam Bell, a noted archer. ¹⁰ **try**: prove. ¹¹ **'In time . . . yoke'**: from *The Spanish Tragedy*—"In time the savage bull sustains the yoke."

and let me be vilely painted; and in such great letters as they write, 'Here is good horse to hire,' let them signify under my sign, 'Here you may see Benedick the married man.'

CLAUDIO.

If this should ever happen, thou wouldst be horn-mad.¹

DON PEDRO.

Nay, if Cupid have not spent all his quiver in Venice,² thou wilt quake for this shortly.

BENEDICK.

I look for an earthquake too, then.

DON PEDRO.

Well, you will temporize with the hours.³ In the meantime, good Signior Benedick, repair to Leonato's: commend me to him,⁴ and tell him I will not fail him at supper; for indeed he hath made great preparation.

BENEDICK.

I have almost matter enough in me for such an embassy; and so I commit you,—

CLAUDIO.

To the tuition⁵ of God: From my house (if I had it),—

DON PEDRO.

The sixth of July: Your loving friend, Benedick.⁶

BENEDICK.

Nay, mock not, mock not. The body of your discourse is sometime guarded⁷ with fragments, and the guards are but slightly basted on neither: ere you flout old ends⁸ any further, examine your conscience: and so I leave you. [Exit.]

¹ *horn-mad*: raving mad. ² *Cupid . . . Venice*: Venice was known as a city where love held sway. ³ *you . . . hours*: you will change your opinion in time. ⁴ *commend me to him*: give him my greetings. ⁵ *tuition*: guardianship. ⁶ *The sixth . . . Benedick*: a parody on the conventional closing of a letter. ⁷ *guarded*: trimmed. ⁸ *flout old ends*: make sport of old endings (sayings).

CLAUDIO.

My liege, your highness now may do me good.

DON PEDRO.

My love is thine to teach:¹ teach it but how,
And thou shalt see how apt it is to learn
Any hard lesson that may do thee good.

CLAUDIO.

Hath Leonato any son, my lord?

DON PEDRO.

No child but Hero; she's his only heir.
Dost thou affect her,² Claudio?

CLAUDIO.

O, my lord,

When you went onward³ on this ended action,⁴
I lookt upon her with a soldier's eye,
That liked, but had a rougher task in hand
Than to drive liking to the name of love:
But now I am return'd, and that war-thoughts
Have left their places⁵ vacant, in their rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
Saying, I liked her ere I went to wars.

DON PEDRO.

Thou wilt be like a lover presently
And tire the hearer with a book of words.
If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it;
And I will break with her⁶ and with her father,
And thou shalt have her. Was't not to this end
That thou began'st to twist⁷ so fine a story?

CLAUDIO.

How sweetly you do minister to love,
That know love's grief by his complexion!
But lest my liking might too sudden seem,
I would have salved⁸ it with a longer treatise.⁹

¹ My love . . . teach: my love is at your command. ² affect her: love her. ³ went onward: started out. ⁴ ended action: recent war. ⁵ places: rooms. ⁶ break with her: broach the subject to her. ⁷ twist: spin. ⁸ salved: softened. ⁹ a longer treatise: further talk.

DON PEDRO.

What need the bridge much broader than the flood?

The fairest grant is the necessity.¹

Look, what will serve is fit: 'tis once,² thou lovest;

And I will fit thee with the remedy.

I know we shall have revelling to-night:

I will assume thy part in some disguise,

And tell fair Hero I am Claudio;

And in her bosom I'll unclasp³ my heart,

And take her hearing prisoner with the force

And strong encounter of my amorous tale:

Then after⁴ to her father will I break;

And the conclusion is, she shall be thine.

In practice let us put it presently.⁵

[Exeunt.

SCENE II.

A room in LEONATO'S house.

Enter, severally,⁶ LEONATO and ANTONIO.

LEONATO.

How now, brother! Where is my cousin,⁷ your son? hath he provided this music?

ANTONIO.

He is very busy about it. But, brother, I can tell you strange news, that you yet dreamt not of.

LEONATO.

Are they good?

ANTONIO.

As the event stamps them:⁸ but they have a good cover; they show well outward. The prince and Count Claudio, walking in a thick-pleacht⁹ alley in my orchard,¹⁰ were thus much

¹ The fairest . . . necessity: the best gift is that which fills the necessity of the moment. ² 'tis once: once and for all. ³ unclasp: reveal. ⁴ after: afterwards. ⁵ presently: immediately. ⁶ severally: separately. ⁷ cousin: used of almost any relationship; Antonio's son would be Leonato's nephew. ⁸ As . . . them: that shall be as subsequent events prove it (the news). ⁹ thick-pleacht: thickly interwoven boughs. ¹⁰ orchard: garden.

overheard by a man of mine:¹ the prince discover'd² to Claudio that he loved my niece your daughter, and meant to acknowledge it this night in a dance; and if he found her accordant,³ he meant to take the present time by the top,⁴ and instantly break with you of it.

LEONATO.

Hath the fellow any wit that told you this?

ANTONIO.

A good sharp fellow: I will send for him; and question him yourself.

LEONATO.

No, no; we will hold it as a dream till it appear itself:⁵ but I will acquaint my daughter withal, that she may be the better prepared for an answer, if peradventure this be true. Go you and tell her of it.—[Exit ANTONIO.—*Several persons cross the stage.*] Cousins, you know what you have to do.—O, I cry you mercy,⁶ friend; go you with me, and I will use your skill.—Good cousin, have a care this busy time. [Exit.]

SCENE III.

Another room in LEONATO's house.

Enter DON JOHN and CONRADE.

CONRADE.

What the good-year,⁷ my lord! why are you thus out of measure⁸ sad?

DON JOHN.

There is no measure in the occasion that breeds it; therefore the sadness is without limit.

¹ man of mine: servant. ² discover'd: made known. ³ accordant: agreeable. ⁴ by the top: by the forelock. ⁵ till . . . itself: until it appears as a reality. ⁶ cry you mercy: beg your pardon. ⁷ What the good-year: an expletive of unknown origin. ⁸ out of measure: unreasonably.

CONRADE.

You should hear reason.

DON JOHN.

And when I have heard it, what blessing bringeth it?

CONRADE.

If not a present remedy, yet a patient sufferance.¹

DON JOHN.

I wonder that thou, being (as thou say'st thou art) born under Saturn,² goest about to apply a moral medicine to a mortifying mischief.³ I cannot hide what I am: I must be sad when I have cause, and smile at no man's jests; eat when I have stomach,⁴ and wait for no man's leisure; sleep when I am drowsy, and tend on⁵ no man's business; laugh when I am merry, and claw no man in his humour.⁶

CONRADE.

Yea, but you must not make the full show of this till you may do it without controlment.⁷ You have of late stood out against your brother, and he hath ta'en you newly into his grace;⁸ where it is impossible you should take true root but by the fair weather that you make yourself: it is needful that you frame the season for your own harvest.

DON JOHN.

I had rather be a canker⁹ in a hedge than a rose in his grace; and it better fits my blood to be disdain'd of all than to fashion a carriage¹⁰ to rob love from any: in this, though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain. I am trusted with a muzzle, and enfranchised with a clog;¹¹ therefore I have de-

¹ sufferance: endurance. ² born under Saturn: it was an old belief that those born under the sign of Saturn had a saturnine disposition. ³ mortifying mischief: fatal disease. ⁴ stomach: appetite. ⁵ tend on: attend to. ⁶ claw . . . humour: flatter no man's fancies (humours). ⁷ controlment: constraint. ⁸ grace: favor. ⁹ canker: dog rose. ¹⁰ carriage: deportment. ¹¹ enfranchised with a clog: free to move about, but watched (shackled).

creed not to sing in my cage. If I had my mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I would do my liking: in the mean time let me be that I am, and seek not to alter me.

CONRADE.

Can you make no use of your discontent?

DON JOHN.

I make all use of it, for I use it only.¹—Who comes here?

Enter BORACHIO.

What news, Borachio?

BORACHIO.

I came yonder from a great supper: the prince your brother is royally entertain'd by Leonato; and I can give you intelligence of an intended marriage.

DON JOHN.

Will it serve for any model² to build mischief on? What is he for a fool³ that betroths himself to unquietness?

BORACHIO.

Marry, it is your brother's right hand.

DON JOHN.

Who, the most exquisite Claudio?

BORACHIO.

Even he.

DON JOHN.

A proper⁴ squire! And who, and who? which way looks he?

BORACHIO.

Marry, on Hero, the daughter and heir of Leonato.

¹ use it only: make nothing else my counselor.

² model: plan.

³ What is he for a fool: what sort of fool is he.

⁴ proper: fine (used sarcastically).

DON JOHN.

A very forward March-chick! ¹ How came you to this?

BORACHIO.

Being entertain'd for² a perfumer, as I was smoking a musty room,³ comes me the prince and Claudio, hand in hand, in sad conference:⁴ I whipt me behind the arras;⁵ and there heard it agreed upon, that the prince should woo Hero for himself, and having obtain'd her, give her to Count Claudio.

DON JOHN.

Come, come, let us thither: this may prove food to my displeasure.⁶ That young start-up⁷ hath all the glory of my overthrow: if I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way. You are both sure,⁸ and will assist me?

CONRADE.

To the death, my lord.

DON JOHN.

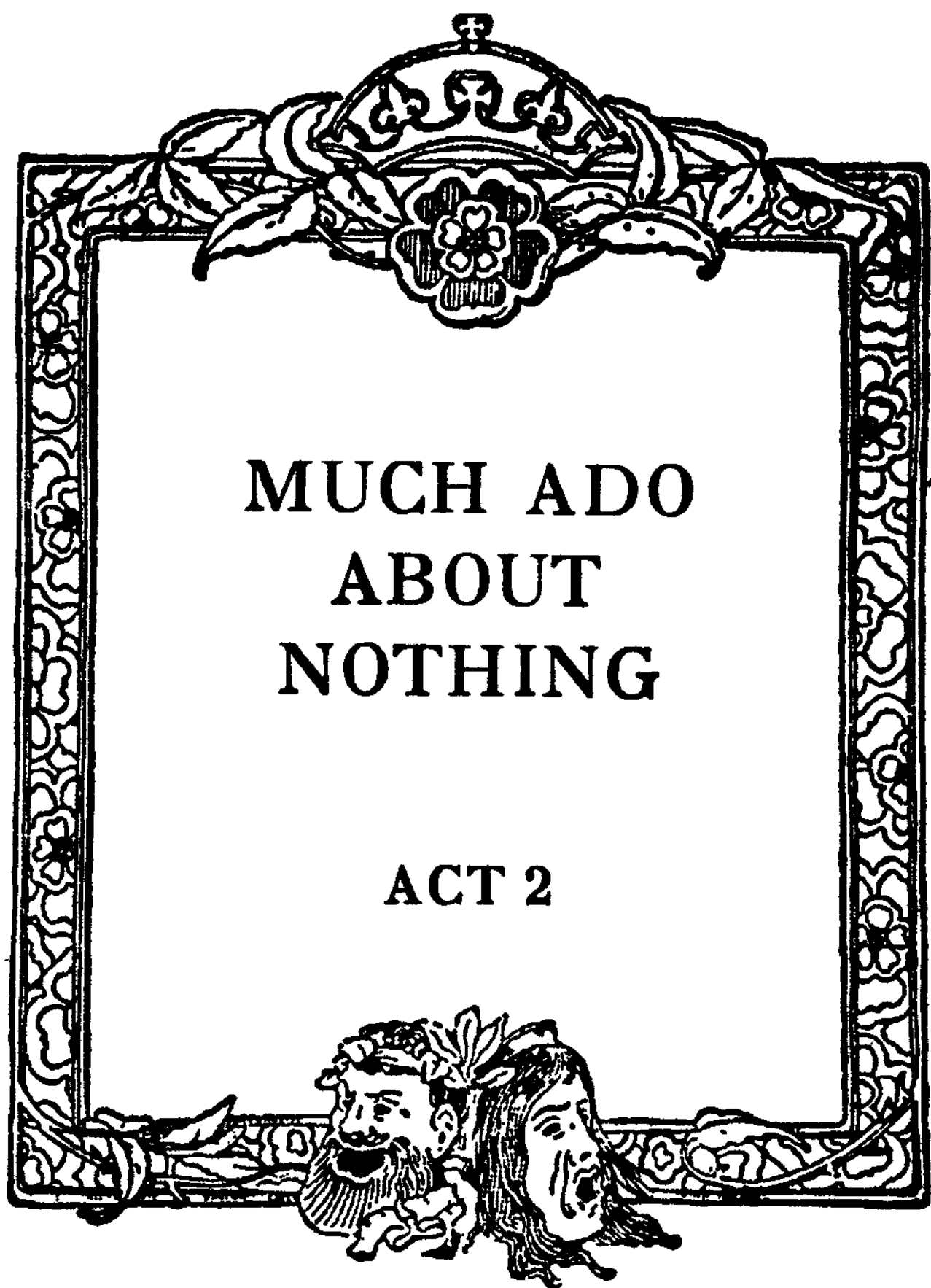
Let us to the great supper: their cheer is the greater that I am subdued. Would the cook were of my mind! ⁹—Shall we go prove what's to be done?

BORACHIO.

We'll wait upon your lordship.

[*Exeunt.*]

¹ forward March-chick: precocious youngster hatched too early.
² entertain'd for: employed as. ³ smoking . . . room: smoke from sweet-smelling wood cleared the odors from Elizabethan rooms.
⁴ sad conference: serious discussion. ⁵ arras: wall tapestries from Arras, France, usually hung on stands a little away from the wall.
⁶ displeasure: disgruntlement. ⁷ start-up: upstart. ⁸ sure: to be relied on. ⁹ were of my mind: that is, would be inclined to put poison in the food, to satisfy Don John's hostility against the world.



**MUCH ADO
ABOUT
NOTHING**

ACT 2

ACT II

AFTER SOME brief comments on the surliness of Don John, the party at Leonato's house proceeds with spirit. Don Pedro leads Hero away to woo her for Claudio, and among the other couples are Beatrice and Benedick, who cheerfully exchange their customary vituperations. Don John, pretending to mistake Claudio for Benedick, tells him that Don Pedro is wooing Hero for himself, but Claudio's misgivings are dispelled when the Prince announces his mission is successful. The Prince, the two lovers, and Leonato discuss the wedding date and it is fixed for seven days hence. To fill in the interval, Don Pedro proposes they should try to make a match of Benedick and Beatrice. Meanwhile, Don John and Borachio plot to thwart the marriage. Borachio will persuade Margaret, one of Hero's gentlewomen, to dress as Hero and talk to him from the window of Hero's room late at night. Don Pedro and Claudio will be apprized beforehand so that they can witness the scene and imagine that Hero is unfaithful. The rest of the act concerns the successful attempt of Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato to persuade Benedick that Beatrice's asperity conceals passionate love for him.

ACT II. SCENE I.

A hall in LEONATO'S house.

Enter LEONATO, ANTONIO, HERO, BEATRICE, and others.

LEONATO.

Was not Count John here at supper?

ANTONIO.

I saw him not.

BEATRICE.

How tartly that gentleman looks! I never can see him but I am heart-burn'd¹ an hour after.

HERO.

He is of a very melancholy disposition.

BEATRICE.

He were² an excellent man that were made just in the midway between him and Benedick: the one is too like an image,³ and says nothing; and the other too like my lady's eldest son, evermore tattling.

LEONATO.

Then half Signior Benedick's tongue in Count John's mouth, and half Count John's melancholy in Signior Benedick's face,—

BEATRICE.

With a good leg and a good foot, uncle, and money enough in his purse, such a man would win any woman in the world,—if a' could get her good-will.

LEONATO.

By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee a husband, if thou be so shrewd⁴ of thy tongue.

ANTONIO.

In faith, she's too curst.⁵

BEATRICE.

Too curst is more than curst: I shall lessen God's sending that way; for it is said, 'God sends a curst cow short horns;' but to a cow too curst he sends none.

¹ am heart-burn'd: have indigestion.

² were: would be.

³ image: statue.

⁴ shrewd: shrewish.

⁵ curst: also, shrewish; ill-tempered.

LEONATO.

So, by being too curst, God will send you no horns.

BEATRICE.

Just,¹ if he send me no husband; for the which blessing I am at him upon my knees every morning and evening. Lord, I could not endure a husband with a beard on his face: I had rather lie in the woollen.²

LEONATO.

You may light on a husband that hath no beard.

BEATRICE.

What should I do with him? dress him in my apparel, and make him my waiting-gentlewoman? He that hath a beard is more than a youth; and he that hath no beard is less than a man: and he that is more than a youth is not for me; and he that is less than a man, I am not for him: therefore I will even take sixpence in earnest³ of the bear-ward,⁴ and lead his apes into hell.⁵

LEONATO.

Well, then, go you into hell?

BEATRICE.

No; but to the gate; and there will the devil meet me, like an old cuckold, with horns on his head, and say, 'Get you to heaven, Beatrice, get you to heaven; here's no place for you-maids:' so deliver I up my apes, and away to Saint Peter for the heavens; he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we as merry as the day is long.

ANTONIO.

Well, niece [to HERO], I trust you will be ruled by your father.

¹ Just: just so; exactly. ² lie in the woollen: that is, between rough woollen blankets, without sheets. ³ in earnest: as a token of payment. ⁴ bear-ward: bear trainer and exhibitor, with apes often riding on the backs of the bears. ⁵ lead . . . hell: be an old maid: according to an old saying, "Old maids lead apes in hell."

BEATRICE.

Yes, faith; it is my cousin's duty to make curtesy, and say, 'Father, as it please you:'—but yet for all that, cousin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make another curtesy, and say, 'Father, as it please me.'

LEONATO.

Well, niece, I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband.

BEATRICE.

Not till God make men of some other metal than earth. Would it not grieve a woman to be overmaster'd with a piece of valiant dust? to make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl? ¹ No, uncle, I'll none: ² Adam's sons are my brethren; ³ and, truly, I hold it a sin to match in my kindred. ⁴

LEONATO.

Daughter, remember what I told you: if the prince do solicit you in that kind, ⁵ you know your answer.

BEATRICE.

The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be not wooed in good time: if the prince be too important, ⁶ tell him there is measure ⁷ in every thing, and so dance out the answer. For, hear me, Hero:—wooing, wedding, and repenting, is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinque-pace: ⁸ the first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly-modest, as a measure, full of state and ancientry; ⁹ and then comes repentance, and, with his bad legs, falls into the cinque-pace faster and faster, till he sink into his grave.

¹ marl: clay.

² I'll none: I'll have no husband.

³ brethren:

brothers. ⁴ match . . . kindred: marry a kinsman.

⁵ in that

kind: regarding marriage.

⁶ important: importunate.

⁷ measure:

moderation, with a pun on the meaning of *measure* as a dance.

⁸ cinque-pace: a lively dance, very much like the French *galliard*.

⁹ state and ancientry: old-fashioned stateliness.

LEONATO.

Cousin, you apprehend passing¹ shrewdly.

BEATRICE.

I have a good eye, uncle; I can see a church by daylight.²

LEONATO.

The revellers are ent'ring, brother: make good room.

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, BALTHAZAR, DON JOHN, BORACHIO, MARGARET, URSULA, and others, maskt; with a drum.

DON PEDRO.

Lady, will you walk about with your friend?

HERO.

So³ you walk softly,⁴ and look sweetly, and say nothing, I am yours for the walk; and especially when I walk away.

DON PEDRO.

With me in your company?

HERO.

I may say so, when I please.

DON PEDRO.

And when please you to say so?

HERO.

When I like your favour;⁵ for God defend⁶ the lute should be like the case!

DON PEDRO.

My visor⁷ is Philemon's roof;⁸ within the house is Jove.

HERO.

Why, then, your visor should be thatcht.

DON PEDRO.

Speak low, if you speak love.

[Takes her aside.]

¹ passing: exceedingly. ² I can . . . daylight: that is, I am not completely blind. ³ So: provided that. ⁴ softly: slowly. ⁵ favour: appearance. ⁶ defend: forbid. ⁷ visor: mask. ⁸ Philemon's roof: a reference to the peasant couple, Philemon and Baucis, who, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, entertained Jupiter in their thatched cottage.

BALTHAZAR.

Well, I would you did like me.

MARGARET.

So would not I, for your own sake; for I have many ill qualities.

BALTHAZAR.

Which is one?

MARGARET.

I say my prayers aloud.

BALTHAZAR.

I love you the better: the hearers may cry, Amen.

MARGARET.

God match me with a good dancer!

BALTHAZAR.

Amen.

MARGARET.

And God keep him out of my sight when the dance is done!
—Answer, clerk.¹

BALTHAZAR.

No more words: the clerk is answer'd.

URSULA.

I know you well enough; you are Signior Antonio.

ANTONIO.

At a word,² I am not.

URSULA.

I know you by the waggling of your head.

ANTONIO.

To tell you true, I counterfeit him.

URSULA.

You could never do him so ill-well,³ unless you were the very man. Here's his dry hand⁴ up and down:⁵ you are he, you are he.

¹ clerk: the reader of the responses in the English church service.

² At a word: in a word.

³ do him so ill-well: imitate his bad manners so well.

⁴ dry hand: supposedly the mark of a cold nature.

⁵ up and down: for all the world; exactly.

ANTONIO.

At a word, I am not.

URSULA.

Come, come, do you think I do not know you by your excellent wit? can virtue hide itself? Go to, mum,¹ you are he: graces will appear, and there's an end.²

BEATRICE.

Will you not tell me who told you so?

BENEDICK.

No, you shall pardon me.

BEATRICE.

Nor will you not tell me who you are?

BENEDICK.

Not now.

BEATRICE.

That I was disdainful, and that I had my good wit out of the *Hundred Merry Tales*:³—well, this was Signior Benedick that said so.

BENEDICK.

What's he?

BEATRICE.

I am sure you know him well enough.

BENEDICK.

Not I, believe me.

BEATRICE.

Did he never make you laugh?

BENEDICK.

I pray you, what is he?

BEATRICE.

Why, he is the prince's jester: a very dull fool; only his gift⁴ is in devising impossible⁵ slanders: none but libertines delight in him; and the commendation is not in his wit but, in his

¹ mum: be quiet.

² there's an end: there is no more to be said about it.

³ *Hundred Merry Tales*: a collection of coarse anecdotes.

⁴ only his gift: his only gift.

⁵ impossible: too absurd to be believed.

villainy;¹ for he both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him and beat him. I am sure he is in the fleet:² I would he had boarded³ me.

BENEDICK.

When I know the gentleman, I'll tell him what you say.

BEATRICE.

Do, do: he'll but break a comparison⁴ or two on me; which, peradventure, not markt,⁵ or not laugh'd at, strikes him into melancholy; and then there's a partridge wing saved, for the fool will eat no supper that night. [*Music within.*] We must follow the leaders.

BENEDICK.

In every good thing.

BEATRICE.

Nay, if they lead to any ill, I will leave them at the next turning.

[*Music. Dance. Then exeunt all except DON JOHN, BORACHIO, and CLAUDIO.*]

DON JOHN.

Sure my brother is amorous on Hero, and hath withdrawn her father to break with him about it. The ladies follow her, and but one visor⁶ remains.

BORACHIO.

And that is Claudio: I know him by his bearing.

DON JOHN.

Are not you Signior Benedick?

CLAUDIO.

You know me well; I am he.

DON JOHN.

Signior, you are very near my brother in his love:⁷ he is

¹ villainy: malice. ² fleet: in the company of the masqueraders.
³ boarded: attacked. ⁴ break a comparison: crack a joke.
⁵ markt: heeded. ⁶ visor: mask. ⁷ near . . . love: well loved by my brother.

enamour'd on¹ Hero; I pray you, dissuade him from her, she is no equal for his birth: you may do the part of an honest² man in it.

CLAUDIO.

How know you he loves her?

DON JOHN.

I heard him swear his affection.

BORACHIO.

So did I too; and he swore he would marry her to-night.

DON JOHN.

Come, let us to the banquet.

[*Exeunt* DON JUAN *and* BORACHIO.]

CLAUDIO.

Thus answer I in name of Benedick,
But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.
'Tis certain so;—the prince wooes for himself.
Friendship is constant in all other things
Save in the office and affairs of love:
Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues;
Let every eye negotiate for itself,
And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch,
Against whose charms³ faith melteth into blood.⁴
This is an accident of hourly proof,⁵
Which I mistrusted not. Farewell, therefore, Hero!

Enter BENEDICK.

BENEDICK.

Count Claudio?

CLAUDIO.

Yea, the same.

BENEDICK.

Come, will you go with me?

¹ on: of.

² honest: honorable.

³ Against whose charms: in contact with whose charms.

⁴ blood: passion.

⁵ an accident . . . proof: a happening (incident) proved every hour.

CLAUDIO.

Whither?

BENEDICK.

Even to the next willow,¹ about your own business, county.² What fashion will you wear the garland of? ³ about your neck, like an usurer's chain? or under your arm, like a lieutenant's scarf? You must wear it one way, for the prince hath got your Hero.

CLAUDIO.

I wish him joy of her.

BENEDICK.

Why, that's spoken like an honest drovier:⁴ so they sell bullocks. But did you think the prince would have served you thus?

CLAUDIO.

I pray you, leave me.

BENEDICK.

Hol now you strike like the blind man:⁵ 'twas the boy⁶ that stole your meat, and you'll beat the post.⁷

CLAUDIO.

If it will not be, I'll leave you.

[Exit.

BENEDICK.

Alas, poor hurt fowl! now will he creep into sedges.⁸—But, that my Lady Beatrice should know me, and not know me! The prince's fool!—Ha! it may be I go under that title because I am merry.—Yea, but so I am apt to do myself wrong; I am not so reputed: it is the base thought, bitter disposition, of Beatrice that puts the world into her person, and so gives me out.⁹ Well, I'll be revenged as I may.

¹ willow: a symbol for the forsaken lover.

² county: count.

³ What . . . of: how will you wear the garland (of willow).

⁴ honest drovier: true drover (cattle dealer). ⁵ like the blind man:

a probable allusion to an incident in the Spanish "*Lazarillo de Tormes*."

⁶ boy: Cupid.

⁷ post: messenger.

⁸ creep . . .

sedges: go off and hide himself, like a wounded fowl. ⁹ puts

. . . out: assumes to represent the world, and so reports me.

Enter DON PEDRO.

DON PEDRO.

Now, signior, where's the count? did you see him?

BENEDICK.

Troth,¹ my lord, I have play'd the part of Lady Fame.² I found him here as melancholy as a lodge in a warren:³ I told him, and I think I told him true, that your grace had got the good-will of this young lady; and I offer'd him my company to a willow-tree, either to make him a garland, as being forsaken, or to bind him up a rod, as being worthy to be whipt.

DON PEDRO.

To be whipt! What's his fault?

BENEDICK.

The flat transgression⁴ of a school-boy, who, being overjoy'd with finding a bird's-nest, shows it his companion, and he steals it.

DON PEDRO.

Wilt thou make a trust a transgression? The transgression is in the stealer.

BENEDICK.

Yet it had not been amiss the rod had been made, and the garland too; for the garland he might have worn himself, and the rod he might have bestow'd on you, who, as I take it, have stolen his bird's-nest.

DON PEDRO.

I will but teach them to sing, and restore them to the owner.

BENEDICK.

If their singing answer your saying,⁵ by my faith, you say honestly.

¹ Troth: in truth. ² Lady Fame: Dame Rumor. ³ a lodge in a warren: a deserted watchman's hut in a rabbit warren. ⁴ flat transgression: downright prank. ⁵ If their singing . . . saying: if the birds' (Hero) singing bears out what you say.

DON PEDRO.

The Lady Beatrice hath a quarrel to¹ you: the gentleman that danced with her told her she is much wrong'd by you.

BENEDICK.

O, she misused² me past the endurance of a block! an oak but with one green leaf on it would have answer'd her; my very visor began to assume life and scold with her. She told me,—not thinking I had been myself,—that I was the prince's jester, and that I was duller than a great thaw;³ huddling jest upon jest with such impossible conveyance⁴ upon me that I stood like a man at a mark,⁵ with a whole army shooting at me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs: if her breath were as terrible as her terminations,⁶ there were no living near her; she would infect to the north star. I would not marry her, though she were endow'd with all that Adam had left him before he transgressed: she would have made Hercules have turn'd spit,⁷ yea, and have cleft his club to make the fire too. Come, talk not of her: you shall find her the infernal Ate⁸ in good apparel. I would to God some scholar would conjure her;⁹ for certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet in hell as in a sanctuary; and people sin upon purpose, because they would go thither; so, indeed, all disquiet, horror, and perturbation follow her.

DON PEDRO.

Look, here she comes.

Enter CLAUDIO, BEATRICE, HERO, & LEONATO.

BENEDICK.

Will your grace command me any service to the world's end?

¹ to: with. ² misused: abused. ³ a great thaw: when spring thaws resulted in muddy roads, people were forced to stay at home and be bored. ⁴ impossible conveyance: incredible speed. ⁵ at a mark: as a target. ⁶ terminations: terms; words. ⁷ have turn'd spit: perform as a turnspit. ⁸ Ate: the goddess of discord. ⁹ conjure her: drive the devil out of her.

I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes¹ that you can devise to send me on; I will fetch you a toothpicker now from the furthest inch of Asia; bring you the length of Prester John's² foot; fetch you a hair off the great Cham's³ beard; do you any embassy to the Pigmies;⁴—rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. You have no employment for me?

DON PEDRO.

None, but to desire your good company.

BENEDICK.

O God, sir, here's a dish I love not: I cannot endure my Lady Tongue. [Exit.]

DON PEDRO.

Come, lady, come; you have lost the heart of Signior Benedick.

BEATRICE.

Indeed, my lord, he lent it me awhile; and I gave him use⁵ for it,—a double heart for his single one: marry, once before he won it of me with false dice, therefore your grace may well say I have lost it.

DON PEDRO.

You have put him down,⁶ lady, you have put him down.

BEATRICE.

So I would not he should do me, my lord, lest I should prove the mother of fools.—I have brought Count Claudio, whom you sent me to seek.

DON PEDRO.

Why, how now, count! wherefore are you sad?

¹ **Antipodes:** the other side of the world. ² **Prester John:** a fabled Christian emperor who ruled over a remote part of Asia or Africa.

³ **great Cham:** the Khan of Tartary. ⁴ **Pigmies:** a mythical race of dwarfs who lived either near the sources of the Nile or in India.

⁵ **use:** usury; interest. ⁶ **put him down:** got the better of him.

CLAUDIO.

Not sad, my lord.

DON PEDRO.

How then? sick?

CLAUDIO.

Neither, my lord.

BEATRICE.

The count is neither sad, nor sick, nor merry, nor well; but civil,¹ count,—civil as an orange, and something² of that jealous complexion.

DON PEDRO.

I'faith, lady, I think your blazon³ to be true; though, I'll be sworn, if he be so, his conceit⁴ is false.—Here, Claudio, I have woo'd in thy name, and fair Hero is won: I have broke with her father, and, his good-will obtain'd, name the day of marriage, and God give thee joy!

LEONATO.

Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes: his grace hath made the match, and all grace⁵ say Amen to it!

BEATRICE.

Speak, count, 'tis your cue.

CLAUDIO.

Silence is the perfectest herald of joy: I were but little happy, if I could say how much.—Lady, as you are mine, I am yours: I give away myself for you, and dote upon the exchange.

BEATRICE.

Speak, cousin; or, if you cannot, stop his mouth with a kiss, and let not him speak neither.

DON PEDRO.

In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

¹ civil: between sour and sweet, with a pun on the Seville orange.

² something: somewhat.

³ blazon: description.

⁴ his conceit: his conception of himself.

⁵ all grace: heaven.

BEATRICE.

Yea, my lord; I thank it, poor fool, it keeps on the windy side of care.¹—My cousin tells him in his ear that he is in her heart.

CLAUDIO.

And so she doth, cousin.

BEATRICE.

Good Lord, for alliance!—Thus goes every one to the world but I, and I am sun-burn'd;² I may sit in a corner, and cry heigh-ho for a husband!

DON PEDRO.

Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

BEATRICE.

I would rather have one of your father's getting.³ Hath your grace ne'er a brother like you? Your father got⁴ excellent husbands, if a maid could come by them.

DON PEDRO.

Will you have me, lady?

BEATRICE.

No, my lord, unless I might have another for working-days: your grace is too costly to wear every day. But, I beseech your grace, pardon me: I was born to speak all mirth and no matter.

DON PEDRO.

Your silence most offends me, and to be merry best becomes you; for, out of question,⁵ you were born in a merry hour.

BEATRICE.

No, sure, my lord, my mother cried; but then there was a star danced, and under that was I born.—Cousins, God give you joy!

¹ windy side of care: the side away from the wind, where cares cannot find it.

² sun-burn'd: homely; also, unsheltered.

³ getting: begetting.

⁴ got: begot.

⁵ out of question: unquestionably.

LEONATO.

Niece, will you look to those things I told you of?

BEATRICE.

I cry you mercy,¹ uncle.—By your grace's pardon. [Exit.

DON PEDRO.

By my troth, a pleasant-spirited lady.

LEONATO.

There's little of the melancholy element in her, my lord: she is never sad² but when she sleeps; and not ever sad then; for I have heard my daughter say, she hath often dreamt of unhappiness, and waked herself with laughing.

DON PEDRO.

She cannot endure to hear tell³ of a husband.

LEONATO.

O, by no means: she mocks⁴ all her wooers out of suit.⁵

DON PEDRO.

She were⁶ an excellent wife for Benedick.

LEONATO.

O Lord, my lord, if they were but a week married, they would talk themselves mad!

DON PEDRO.

County Claudio, when mean you to go to church?

CLAUDIO.

To-morrow, my lord: time goes on crutches till love have all his rites.

LEONATO.

Not till Monday, my dear son, which is hence a just seven-night;⁷ and a time too brief, too, to have all things answer my mind.

DON PEDRO.

Come, you shake the head at so long a breathing:⁸ but, I

¹ I cry you mercy: I beg your pardon. ² sad: serious. ³ hear tell: hear talk. ⁴ mocks: scorns. ⁵ suit: courtship. ⁶ were: would be. ⁷ a just seven-night: exactly one week. ⁸ breathing: delay.

warrant thee, Claudio, the time shall not go dully by us. I will, in the interim, undertake one of Hercules' labours;¹ which is, to bring Signior Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection the one with the other. I would fain² have it a match; and I doubt not but to fashion it, if you three will but minister such assistance as I shall give you direction.

LEONATO.

My lord, I am for you, though it cost me ten nights' watchings.³

CLAUDIO.

And I, my lord.

DON PEDRO.

And you too, gentle Hero?

HERO.

I will do any modest office, my lord, to help my cousin to a good husband.

DON PEDRO.

And Benedick is not the unhopefullest⁴ husband that I know. Thus far can I praise him; he is of a noble strain,⁵ of approved⁶ valour, and confirm'd honesty.⁷ I will teach you how to humour your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick;—and I, with your two helps, will so practise on⁸ Benedick, that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy⁹ stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice. If we can do this, Cupid is no longer an archer: his glory shall be ours, for we are the only love-gods. Go in with me, and I will tell you my drift.¹⁰ [Exeunt.]

¹ Hercules' labours: the "Twelve Labours of Hercules." ² fain: gladly. ³ ten nights' watchings: ten sleepless nights. ⁴ unhopefullest: worst. ⁵ strain: family; lineage. ⁶ approved: proved. ⁷ honesty: honor. ⁸ practise on: trick. ⁹ queasy: squeamish; fastidious. ¹⁰ drift: idea.

SCENE II.

Another room in LEONATO's house.

Enter DON JOHN and BORACHIO.

DON JOHN.

It is so; the Count Claudio shall marry the daughter of Leonato.

BORACHIO.

Yea, my lord; but I can cross it.

DON JOHN.

Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be medicinable¹ to me: I am sick in displeasure² to him; and whatsoever comes athwart his affection³ ranges evenly⁴ with mine. How canst thou cross this marriage?

BORACHIO.

Not honestly, my lord; but so covertly that no dishonesty shall appear in me.

DON JOHN.

Show me briefly how.

BORACHIO.

I think I told your lordship, a year since, how much I am in the favour of Margaret, the waiting-gentlewoman to Hero.

DON JOHN.

I remember.

BORACHIO.

I can, at any unseasonable instant of the night, appoint her to look out at her lady's chamber-window.

DON JOHN.

What life is in that, to be the death of this marriage?

BORACHIO.

The poison of that lies in you to temper.⁵ Go you to the prince your brother; spare not to tell him that he hath

¹ **medicinable**: medicinal; healing.

² **displeasure**: dislike.

³ **affection**: wish.

⁴ **ranges evenly**: runs parallel.

⁵ **temper**: compound; mix.

wrong'd his honour in marrying the renown'd Claudio (whose estimation¹ do you mightily hold up)² to a contaminated stale,³ such a one as Hero.

DON JOHN.

What proof shall I make of that?

BORACHIO.

Proof enough to misuse⁴ the prince, to vex Claudio, to undo Hero, and kill Leonato. Look you for any other issue?

DON JOHN.

Only to despise them, I will endeavour any thing.

BORACHIO.

Go, then; find me a meet⁵ hour to draw Don Pedro and the Count Claudio alone: tell them that you know that Hero loves me; intend⁶ a kind of zeal both to the prince and Claudio, as,—in love of your brother's honour, who hath made this match, and his friend's reputation, who is thus like to be cozen'd⁷ with the semblance of a maid,—that you have discover'd thus. They will scarcely believe this without trial: offer them instances;⁸ which shall bear no less likelihood than to see me at her chamber-window; hear me call Margaret, Hero; hear Margaret term me Claudio; and bring them to see this the very night before the intended wedding,—for in the mean time I will so fashion the matter that Hero shall be absent, and there shall appear such seeming truth of Hero's disloyalty, that jealousy shall be call'd assurance,⁹ and all the preparation overthrown.

¹ estimation: merit. ² hold up: praise. ³ stale: wanton; strumpet.
⁴ misuse: deceive. ⁵ meet: convenient. ⁶ intend: pretend.
⁷ cozen'd: tricked; cheated. ⁸ instances: proof. ⁹ jealousy . . .
assurance: "suspicion shall be called certainty"—Wright.

DON JOHN.

Grow this¹ to what adverse issue it can, I will put it in practice. Be cunning² in the working this,³ and thy fee is a thousand ducats.⁴

BORACHIO.

Be you constant⁵ in the accusation, and my cunning shall not shame me.

DON JOHN.

I will presently⁶ go learn their day of marriage. [Exeunt.

SCENE III.

LEONATO'S orchard.

Enter BENEDICK alone.

BENEDICK.

Boy,—

Enter BOY.

BOY.

Signior?—

BENEDICK.

In my chamber-window lies a book: bring it hither to me in the orchard.

BOY.

I am here already,⁷ sir.

BENEDICK.

I know that; but I would have thee hence, and here again. [Exit BOY.]—I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviours to love, will, after he hath laugh't at such shallow follies in others, become the argument⁸ of his own scorn by falling in love: and such a man is Claudio. I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife;⁹ and now

¹ Grow this: let this grow. ² cunning: skillful. ³ the working this: the working out of this plan. ⁴ ducats: Italian coins worth about a dollar. ⁵ constant: steadfast. ⁶ presently: immediately.

⁷ I am here already: that is, he is so swift that no sooner said than done. ⁸ argument: subject. ⁹ the drum and the fife: martial music.

had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe:¹ I have known when he would have walkt ten mile a-foot² to see a good armour; and now will he lie ten nights awake, carving³ the fashion of a new doublet.⁴ He was wont⁵ to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier; and now is he turn'd orthography;⁶ his words are a very fantastical banquet,—just so many strange dishes. May I be so converted, and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not: I will not be sworn but love may transform me to an oyster; but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool. One woman is fair,—yet I am well; another is wise,—yet I am well; another virtuous,—yet I am well: but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace.⁷ Rich she shall be, that's certain; wise, or I'll none;⁸ virtuous, or I'll never cheapen her; fair, or I'll never look on her; mild or come not near me; noble, or not I for an angel;⁹ of good discourse, an excellent musician, and her hair shall be of what colour it please God.—Ha, the prince and Monsieur Love! I will hide me in the arbour.

[Withdraws into the arbour.]

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, LEONATO, BALTHAZAR, and
MUSICIANS.

DON PEDRO.

Come, shall we hear this music?

CLAUDIO.

Yea, my good lord.—How still the evening is,
As husht on purpose to grace¹⁰ harmony!

DON PEDRO.

See you where Benedick hath hid himself?

¹ tabor and the pipe: musical instruments associated with peaceful festivities. ² a-foot: on foot. ³ carving: designing. ⁴ doublet: jacket. ⁵ wont: accustomed. ⁶ orthography: orthographer; that is, he has substituted the abstract for the concrete. ⁷ grace: favor. ⁸ I'll none: I'll have none of her. ⁹ angel: a pun on the coin worth 10s; the noble was worth 6s.8d. ¹⁰ grace: honor.

CLAUDIO.

O, very well, my lord: the music ended,
We'll fit the kid-fox with a pennyworth.¹

DON PEDRO.

Come, Balthazar, we'll hear that song again.

BALTHAZAR.

O, good my lord, tax not² so bad a voice
To slander³ music any more than once.

DON PEDRO.

It is the witness still of excellency
To put a strange face on his own perfection:—⁴
I pray thee, sing, and let me woo no more.

BALTHAZAR.

Because you talk of wooing, I will sing;
Since many a wooer doth commence his suit
To her he thinks not worthy; yet he woos,
Yet will he swear he loves.

DON PEDRO.

Nay, pray thee, come;

Or, if thou wilt hold longer argument,
Do it in notes.⁵

BALTHAZAR.

Note this before my notes,—
There's not a note of mine that's worth the noting.

DON PEDRO.

Why, these are very crotchets⁶ that he speaks;
Note notes, forsooth, and nothing!

[*Music.*]

BENEDICK [*aside*].

Now, 'Divine air!' now is his soul ravisht!—Is it not strange
that sheeps' guts should hale souls out of men's bodies?—
Well, a horn for my money, when all's done.

¹ We'll fit . . . pennyworth: we'll give the young fox his money's worth. ² tax not: do not impose a task on. ³ slander: disgrace.

⁴ It is . . . perfection: it is always a proof of excellence to be unknowing of one's perfection. ⁵ notes: music. ⁶ crotchets: a pun on the two meanings of the word—notes of music and whims.

BALTHAZAR *sings*.

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever;
One foot in sea, and one on shore;
To one thing constant never:
Then sigh not so,
But let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny;
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey nonny, nonny.

Sing no more ditties, sing no moe¹
Of dumps² so dull and heavy;
The fraud of men was ever so,
Since summer first was leavy.³
Then sigh not so, &c.

DON PEDRO.

By my troth, a good song.

BALTHAZAR.

And an ill singer, my lord.

DON PEDRO.

Ha, no, no, faith; thou sing'st well enough for a shift.⁴

BENEDICK [*aside*].

An⁵ he had been a dog that should have howl'd thus, they would have hang'd him: and I pray God his bad voice bode no mischief! I had as lief⁶ have heard the night-raven,⁷ come what plague could have come after it.

DON PEDRO.

Yea, marry, dost thou hear, Balthazar? I pray thee, get us some excellent music; for to-morrow night we would have it at the Lady Hero's chamber-window.

¹ moe: more.

² dumps: melancholy tunes.

³ leavy: leafy.

⁴ shift: makeshift.

⁵ An: if.

⁶ as lief: as soon.

⁷ night-raven:

a symbol of ill omen.

BALTHAZAR.

The best I can, my lord.

DON PEDRO.

Do so: farewell. [*Exeunt BALTHAZAR and MUSICIANS.*]—Come hither, Leonato. What was it you told me of to-day,—that your niece Beatrice was in love with Signior Benedick?

CLAUDIO.

O, ay:—stalk on,¹ stalk on; the fowl sits [*aside to PEDRO*].
—I did never think that lady would have loved any man.

LEONATO.

No, nor I neither; but most wonderful that she should so dote on Signior Benedick, whom she hath in all outward behaviours seem'd ever to abhor.

BENEDICK [*aside*].

Is't possible? Sits the wind in that corner? ²

LEONATO.

By my troth, my lord, I cannot tell what to think of it: but that she loves him with an enraged ³ affection,—it is past the infinite⁴ of thought.

DON PEDRO.

May be she doth but counterfeit.

CLAUDIO.

Faith, like enough.

LEONATO.

O God, counterfeit! There was never counterfeit of passion came so near the life of passion as she discovers⁵ it.

DON PEDRO.

Why; what effects of passion shows she?

¹ stalk on: an expression used in the stalking of game.

² Sits . . . corner: is that the way the wind blows.

³ an enraged: a frenzied.

⁴ infinite: utmost power.

⁵ discovers: shows.

CLAUDIO [*aside*].

Bait the hook well; this fish will bite.

LEONATO.

What effects, my lord!—She will sit you,—you heard my daughter tell you how.

CLAUDIO.

She did, indeed.

DON PEDRO.

How, how, I pray you? You amaze me: I would have thought her spirit had been invincible against all assaults of affection.

LEONATO.

I would have sworn it had, my lord; especially against Benedick.

BENEDICK [*aside*].

I should think this a gull,¹ but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it: knavery cannot, sure, hide himself in such reverence.²

CLAUDIO [*aside*].

He hath ta'en th'infection: hold it up.³

DON PEDRO.

Hath she made her affection known to Benedick?

LEONATO.

No; and swears she never will: that's her torment.

CLAUDIO.

'Tis true, indeed; so your daughter says: 'Shall I,' says she, 'that have so oft encounter'd him with scorn, write to him that I love him?'

LEONATO.

This says she now when she is beginning to write to him; for she'll be up twenty times a night; and there will she sit in her

¹ gull: trick.

² such reverence: a man so worthy of respect.

³ hold it up: continue the deception; keep the joke going.

smock¹ till she have writ a sheet of paper:—my daughter tells us all.

CLAUDIO.

Now you talk of a sheet of paper, I remember a pretty jest your daughter told us of.

LEONATO.

O,—when she had writ it, and was reading it over, she found Benedick and Beatrice between the sheet?—

CLAUDIO.

That.²

LEONATO.

O, she tore the letter into a thousand halfpence;³ rail'd at herself, that she should be so immodest to write⁴ to one that she knew would flout⁵ her: 'I measure him,' says she, 'by my own spirit; for I should flout him, if he writ to me; yea, though I love him, I should.'

CLAUDIO.

Then down upon her knees she falls, weeps, sobs, beats her heart, tears her hair, prays, curses;—'O sweet Benedick! God give me patience!'

LEONATO.

She doth indeed; my daughter says so: and the ecstasy⁶ hath so much overborne her, that my daughter is sometime afraid she will do a desperate outrage to herself: it is very true.

DON PEDRO.

It were good that Benedick knew of it by some other, if she will not discover it.⁷

CLAUDIO.

To what end? He would but make a sport of it, and torment the poor lady worse.

¹ smock: undergarment; nightdress. ² That: that was it. ³ half-pence: small pieces. ⁴ to write: as to write. ⁵ flout: scorn.
⁶ ecstasy: passion. ⁷ if she . . . it: if she will not tell him of her love.

DON PEDRO.

An he should, it were¹ an alms² to hang him. She's an excellent-sweet lady; and, out of all suspicion,³ she is virtuous.

CLAUDIO.

And she is exceeding wise.

DON PEDRO.

In everything but in loving Benedick.

LEONATO.

O, my lord, wisdom and blood combating in so tender a body, we have ten proofs to one that blood hath the victory. I am sorry for her, as I have just cause, being her uncle and her guardian.

DON PEDRO.

I would she had bestow'd this dotage⁴ on me: I would have daff'd⁵ all other respects,⁶ and made her half myself. I pray you, tell Benedick of it, and hear what he will say.

LEONATO.

Were it good, think you?

CLAUDIO.

Hero thinks surely she will die; for she says she will die, if he love her not; and she will die, ere she make her love known; and she will die, if he woo her, rather than she will bate⁷ one breath of her accusom'd crossness.

DON PEDRO.

She doth well: if she should make tender⁸ of her love, 'tis very possible he'll scorn it; for the man, as you know all, hath a contemptible⁹ spirit.

CLAUDIO.

He is a very proper¹⁰ man.

¹ it were: it would be. ² an alms: an act of charity. ³ out of all suspicion: beyond suspicion. ⁴ dotage: doting affection. ⁵ daff'd: doffed; put aside. ⁶ respects: considerations. ⁷ bate: abate. ⁸ tender: offer. ⁹ contemptible: contemptuous. ¹⁰ proper: good-looking.

DON PEDRO.

He hath indeed a good outward happiness.¹

CLAUDIO.

'Fore God,² and in my mind,³ very wise.

DON PEDRO.

He doth indeed show some sparks that are like wit.

LEONATO.

And I take him to be valiant.

DON PEDRO.

As Hector,⁴ I assure you: and in the managing of quarrels you may say he is wise; for either he avoids them with great discretion, or undertakes them with a most Christian-like fear.

LEONATO.

If he do fear God, a' ⁵ must necessarily keep the peace: if he break the peace, he ought to enter into a quarrel with fear and trembling.

DON PEDRO.

And so will he do; for the man doth fear God, howsoever it seems not in him by some large⁶ jests he will make. Well, I am sorry for your niece. Shall we go seek Benedick, and tell him of her love?

CLAUDIO.

Never tell him, my lord: let her wear it out⁷ with good counsel.⁸

LEONATO.

Nay, that's impossible: she may wear her heart out first.

DON PEDRO.

Well, we will hear further of it by your daughter: let it cool the while. I love Benedick well; and I could wish he would

¹ good outward happiness: prepossessing appearance. ² 'Fore God: before God; as God is my witness. ³ in my mind: in my opinion.
⁴ Hector: the bravest of the Trojan warriors. ⁵ a': he. ⁶ large: broad. ⁷ wear it out: overcome it. ⁸ counsel: reflection.

modestly examine himself, to see how much he is unworthy so good a lady.¹

LEONATO.

My lord, will you walk? ² dinner is ready.

CLAUDIO [*aside*].

If he do not dote on her upon this,³ I will never trust my expectation.

DON PEDRO [*aside*].

Let there be the same net spread for her: and that must your daughter and her gentlewomen carry. The sport will be, when they hold one an opinion of another's⁴ dotage, and no such matter:⁵ that's the scene that I would see, which will be merely a dumb-show.⁶ Let us send her to call him in to dinner. [*Exeunt DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and LEONATO.*

BENEDICK [*coming forward*].

This can be no trick: the conference was sadly borne.⁷ They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady: it seems her affections have their full bent.⁸ Love me! why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censured:⁹ they say I will bear myself proudly, if I perceive the love come from her; they say too that she will rather die than give any sign of affection.—I did never think to marry:—I must not seem proud:—happy are they that hear their detractions, and can put them to mending. They say the lady is fair,—'tis a truth, I can bear them witness; and virtuous,—'tis so, I cannot reprove¹⁰ it; and wise, but for loving me,—by my troth, it is no addition¹¹ to her wit, nor no great argument¹² of her folly,

¹ so good a lady: such a good lady. ² walk: withdraw. ³ upon this: in consequence of this. ⁴ another's: the other's. ⁵ no such matter: nothing of the kind. ⁶ dumb-show: pantomime. ⁷ sadly borne: seriously carried on. ⁸ have . . . bent: are at their utmost tension (as in archery). ⁹ censured: judged. ¹⁰ reprove: disprove. ¹¹ addition: honor. ¹² argument: proof.

for I will be horribly in love with her. I may chance have some odd quirks¹ and remnants of wit broken on me, because I have rail'd so long against marriage: but doth not the appetite alter? a man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age. Shall quips² and sentences,³ and these paper-bullets of the brain, awe a man from the career of his humour? ⁴ no, the world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married.—Here comes Beatrice. By this day, she's a fair lady: I do spy some marks of love in her.

Enter BEATRICE.

BEATRICE.

Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner.

BENEDICK.

Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.

BEATRICE.

I took no more pains for those thanks than you take pains to thank me: if it had been painful, I would not have come.

BENEDICK.

You take pleasure, then, in the message?

BEATRICE.

Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point, and choke a daw withal.⁵—You have no stomach,⁶ signior: fare you well. *[Exit.]*

BENEDICK.

Ha! 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner,'—there's a double meaning in that. 'I took no more pains for those thanks than you took pains to thank me,'—that's as much as to say, Any pains that I take for you is as easy as

¹ odd quirks: absurd conceits.

² quips: sarcastic remarks.

³ sentences: maxims.

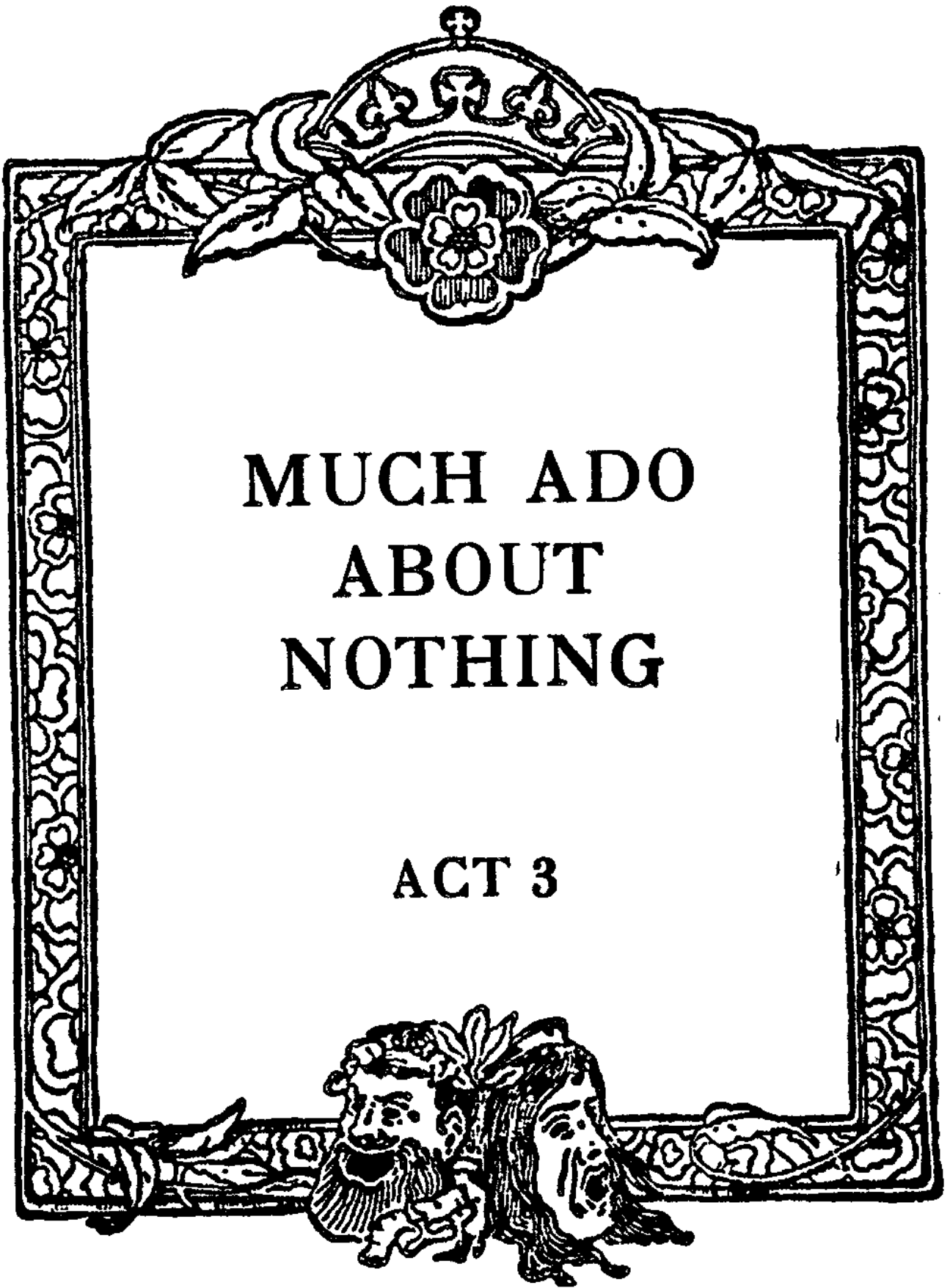
⁴ the career of his humour: his inclinations.

⁵ choke . . . withal: choke a jackdaw with it.

⁶ stomach: appetite.

thanks.—If I do not take pity of ¹ her, I am a villain; if I do not love her, I am a Jew. I will go get her picture. [Exit.

¹ of: on.



**MUCH ADO
ABOUT
NOTHING**

ACT 3

ACT III

A SIMILAR trap is laid by Hero and her two gentlewomen for Beatrice, whereby that spirited lady is persuaded that Benedick is dying of love for her. Pedro and Claudio chaff Benedick about his love, but their merriment later ends when Don John assures them that Hero is disloyal. By chance, two watchmen, Hugh Oatcake and George Seacoal, hear Borachio drunkenly disclosing to his companion Conrade how he deceived Claudio by means of his rendezvous with Margaret, and they arrest him. In Hero's room, preparations for the wedding proceed, with Hero feeling a presentiment of tragedy but not knowing its cause, and with Beatrice exchanging badinage with Margaret, who is unconscious of the harm she has done. The dramatic irony of the play reaches its climax when the self-important master constable tries to tell Leonato about the villainous deception but is so loquacious that Leonato has to leave him to go to the wedding.

ACT III. SCENE I.

LEONATO'S orchard.

Enter HERO and two gentlewomen, MARGARET and URSULA.

HERO.

Good Margaret, run thee to the parlour;
There shalt thou find my cousin Beatrice
Proposing¹ with the prince and Claudio:
Whisper her ear,² and tell her, I and Ursula
Walk in the orchard, and our whole discourse
Is all of her; say that thou overheard'st us;
And bid her steal into the pleached bower,
Where honeysuckles, ripen'd by the sun,
Forbid the sun to enter;—like favourites,
Made proud by princes, that advance³ their pride
Against that power that bred it:—there will she hide her,
To listen our purpose. This is thy office:⁴
Bear thee well in it, and leave us alone.

MARGARET.

I'll make her come, I warrant you, presently.⁵

[*Exit.*]

HERO.

Now, Ursula, when Beatrice doth come,
As we do trace⁶ this alley up and down,
Our talk must only be of Benedick.
When I do name him, let it be thy part

¹ Proposing: conversing.

² her ear: in her ear.

³ advance: raise.

⁴ office: duty.

⁵ presently: immediately.

⁶ trace: traverse.

To praise him more than ever man did merit:
My talk to thee must be, how Benedick
Is sick in love with Beatrice. Of this matter¹
Is little Cupid's crafty arrow made,
That only wounds by hearsay. Now begin;

Enter BEATRICE, behind.

For look where Beatrice, like a lapwing, runs
Close by² the ground, to hear our conference.

URSULA.

The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish
Cut with her golden oars³ the silver stream,
And greedily devour the treacherous bait:
So angle we for Beatrice; who even now
Is couched⁴ in the woodbine coverture.⁵
Fear you not my part of the dialogue.

HERO.

Then go we near her, that her ear lose nothing
Of the false-sweet bait that we lay for it.—

[They advance to the bower.]

No, truly, Ursula, she's too disdainful;
I know her spirits are as coy and wild
As haggards⁶ of the rock.

URSULA.

But are you sure
That Benedick loves Beatrice so entirely?

HERO.

So says the prince and my new-trothed lord.

URSULA.

And did they bid you tell her of it, madam?

HERO.

They did entreat me to acquaint her of it;
But I persuaded them, if they loved Benedick,

¹ matter: material.

² by: to.

³ oars: fins.

⁴ couched: crouched.

⁵ coverture: thicket; hiding place.

⁶ haggards: untrained or wild hawks.

To wish him¹ wrestle with affection,
And never to let Beatrice know of it.

URSULA.

Why did you so? Doth not the gentleman
Deserve as full as fortunate² a bed
As ever Beatrice shall couch upon?

HERO.

O god of love! I know he doth deserve
As much as may be yielded to a man:
But Nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice;
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprising³ what they look on; and her wit
Values itself so highly, that to her
All matter else seems weak:⁴ she cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,⁵
She is so self-endear'd.⁶

URSULA.

Sure, I think so;
And therefore certainly it were not good
She knew his love, lest she make sport at it.

HERO.

Why, you speak truth. I never yet saw man,
How⁷ wise, how noble, young, how rarely-feature
But she would spell him backward:⁸ if fair-faced,
She'd swear the gentleman should be her sister;
If black,⁹ why, Nature, drawing of an antic,¹⁰
Made a foul blot; if tall, a lance ill-headed;
If low, an agate¹¹ very vilely cut;
If speaking, why, a vane¹² blown with all winds;
If silent, why, a block moved with none.
So turns she every man the wrong side out;
And never gives to truth and virtue that

¹ wish him: desire him to. ² as full as fortunate: fully as fortunate.

³ Misprising: slighting. ⁴ weak: foolish. ⁵ take . . . affection: accept any form or conception of love. ⁶ self-endear'd: self-loving.

⁷ How: however. ⁸ spell him backward: misconstrue him.

⁹ black: dark-complexioned. ¹⁰ antic: grotesque or comical figure.

¹¹ agate: a figure engraved on an agate in a ring. ¹² vane: weather vane.

Which simpleness¹ and merit purchaseth.

URSULA.

Sure, sure, such carping is not commendable.

HERO.

No, not to be so odd, and from all fashions,²
 As Beatrice is, cannot be commendable:
 But who dare tell her so? If I should speak,
 She would mock me into air; O, she would laugh me
 Out of myself, press me to death³ with wit!
 Therefore let Benedick, like cover'd fire,
 Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly:
 It were a better death than die with mocks,
 Which is as bad as die with tickling.

URSULA.

Yet tell her of it: hear what she will say.

HERO.

No; rather I will go to Benedick,
 And counsel him to fight against his passion.
 And, truly, I'll devise some honest slanders⁴
 To stain my cousin with: one doth not know
 How much an ill word may empoison liking.

URSULA.

O, do not do your cousin such a wrong!
 She cannot be so much without true judgement
 (Having so swift⁵ and excellent a wit
 As she is prized to have)⁶ as to refuse
 So rare a gentleman as Signior Benedick.

HERO.

He is the only man of Italy,
 Always excepted my dear Claudio.

URSULA.

I pray you, be not angry with me, madam,
 Speaking my fancy: Signior Benedick,

¹ simpleness: simplicity. ² from all fashions: so contrary. ³ press
 . . . death: an ancient punishment was to press a person to death
 by placing heavy weights upon his body. ⁴ honest slanders: false-
 hoods that do not belittle her honor. ⁵ swift: ready. ⁶ prized
 to have: credited with having.

For shape, for bearing, argument,¹ and valour,
Goes for most in report through Italy.

HERO.

Indeed, he hath an excellent good name.

URSULA.

His excellence did earn it, ere he had it.—

When are you married, madam?

HERO.

Why, every day, to-morrow.² Come, go in:

I'll show thee some attires;³ and have thy counsel

Which is the best to furnish me⁴ to-morrow.

URSULA [*aside*].

She's limed,⁵ I warrant you: we have caught her, madam.

HERO [*aside*].

If it prove so, then loving goes by haps:⁶

Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps.

[*Exeunt* HERO and URSULA.

BEATRICE [*coming forward*].

What fire is in mine ears? ⁷ Can this be true?

Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?

Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!

No glory lives behind the back of such.

And, Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,

Taming⁸ my wild heart to thy loving hand:

If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee

To bind our loves up in a holy band;

For others say, thou dost deserve, and I

Believe it better than reportingly.⁹

[*Exit.*

¹ argument: intelligent discourse. ² every day, to-morrow: every day after tomorrow. ³ some attires: some of my dresses. ⁴ to furnish me: for me to wear. ⁵ limed: caught, as a bird is caught in birdlime. ⁶ haps: chance. ⁷ What . . . ears: Beatrice's ears are burning because she is being talked about (an old superstition).
⁸ Taming: a term from falconry; to tame a hawk to the hand.
⁹ reportingly: on hearsay.

SCENE II.

*A room in LEONATO'S house.**Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and LEONATO.*

DON PEDRO.

I do but stay till your marriage be consummate,¹ and then go I toward Arragon.

CLAUDIO.

I'll bring² you thither, my lord, if you'll vouchsafe me.³

DON PEDRO.

Nay, that would be as great a soil in the new gloss of your marriage, as to show a child his new coat, and forbid him to wear it. I will only be bold with Benedick for his company;⁴ for, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, he is all mirth: he hath twice or thrice cut Cupid's bow-string, and the little hangman dare not shoot at him; he hath a heart as sound as a bell,⁵ and his tongue is the clapper,—for what his heart thinks, his tongue speaks.

BENEDICK.

Gallants, I am not as I have been.

LEONATO.

So say I: methinks you are sadder.⁶

CLAUDIO.

I hope he be in love.

DON PEDRO.

Hang him, truant! there's no true drop of blood in him, to be truly toucht with love: if he be sad, he wants money.

BENEDICK.

I have the toothache.

¹ consummate: consummated. ² bring: accompany. ³ vouchsafe me: give me permission. ⁴ I . . . company: I will be only so bold as to ask Benedick for his company. ⁵ sound as a bell: a common expression in Shakespeare's day, as it is now. ⁶ sadder: more solemn.

DON PEDRO.

Draw it.

BENEDICK.

Hang it!

CLAUDIO.

You must hang it first, and draw it afterwards.¹

DON PEDRO.

What! sigh for the toothache?

LEONATO.

Where is but a humour or a worm? ²

BENEDICK.

Well, every one can master a grief but he that has it.

CLAUDIO.

Yet say I he is in love.

DON PEDRO.

There is no appearance of fancy³ in him, unless it be a fancy that he hath to strange disguises; as, to be a Dutchman to-day, a Frenchman to-morrow; or in the shape of two countries at once, as, a German from the waist downward, all slops,⁴ and a Spaniard from the hip upward, no doublet.⁵ Unless he have a fancy to this foolery, as it appears he hath, he is no fool for fancy,⁶ as you would have it appear he is.

CLAUDIO.

If he be not in love with some woman, there is no believing old signs: a' ⁷ brushes his hat o' mornings; what should that bode?

DON PEDRO.

Hath any man seen him at the barber's?

CLAUDIO.

No, but the barber's man hath been seen with him; and the

¹ hang . . . afterwards: an allusion to the practice of disemboweling traitors after they were hanged. ² a humour or a worm: supposedly causes of toothaches. ³ fancy: love. ⁴ slops: baggy breeches. ⁵ doublet: jacket. ⁶ no fool for fancy: not to be duped into love. ⁷ a': he.

old ornament of his cheek¹ hath already stuff tennis-balls.²

LEONATO.

Indeed, he looks younger than he did, by the loss of a beard.

DON PEDRO.

Nay, a' rubs himself with civet:³ can you smell him out by that?

CLAUDIO.

That's as much as to say, the sweet youth's in love.

DON PEDRO.

The greatest note⁴ of it is his melancholy.

CLAUDIO.

And when was he wont to wash his face?

DON PEDRO.

Yea, or to paint himself? ⁵ for the which, I hear what they say of him.

CLAUDIO.

Nay, but his jesting spirit; which is now crept into a lute-string,⁶ and new-govern'd by stops.⁷

DON PEDRO.

Indeed, that tells a heavy⁸ tale for him. Conclude, conclude he is in love.

CLAUDIO.

Nay, but I know who loves him.

DON PEDRO.

That would I know too: I warrant, one that knows him not.

CLAUDIO.

Yes, and his ill conditions;⁹ and, in despite¹⁰ of all, dies for him.

DON PEDRO.

She shall be buried with her face upwards.

¹ old ornament of his cheek: his beard. ² tennis-balls: human hair was commonly used to stuff tennis balls. ³ civet: musk; a perfume made from a glandular secretion of the civet cat. ⁴ note: sign.
⁵ paint himself: it was customary for the gallants (dandies) to use make-up. ⁶ crept into a lute-string: transformed into a love song.
⁷ new-govern'd by stops: that is, his spirits are now governed by restraints—as the frets of a lute. ⁸ heavy: melancholy. ⁹ ill conditions: bad qualities. ¹⁰ despite: spite.

BENEDICK.

Yet is this no charm for the toothache.—Old signior, walk aside with me: I have studied eight or nine wise words to speak to you, which these hobby-horses¹ must not hear.

[*Exeunt* BENEDICK and LEONATO.]

DON PEDRO.

For my life, to break with him² about Beatrice.

CLAUDIO.

'Tis even so. Hero and Margaret have by this³ play'd their parts with Beatrice; and then the two bears will not bite one another when they meet.

Enter DON JOHN.

DON JOHN.

My lord and brother, God save you!

DON PEDRO.

Good den,⁴ brother.

DON JOHN.

If your leisure served, I would speak with you.

DON PEDRO.

In private?

DON JOHN.

If it please you: yet Count Claudio may hear: for what I would speak of concerns him.

DON PEDRO.

What's the matter?

DON JOHN [to CLAUDIO].

Means your lordship to be married to-morrow?

DON PEDRO.

You know he does.

DON JOHN.

I know not that, when he knows what I know.

¹ hobby-horses: buffoons.

² break with him: speak to him.

³ by this: by this time.

⁴ Good den: good evening.

CLAUDIO.

If there be any impediment, I pray you discover¹ it.

DON JOHN.

You may think I love you not: let that appear hereafter, and aim better at me² by that I now will manifest. For my brother, I think he holds you well;³ and in dearness of heart⁴ hath help⁵ to effect your ensuing marriage,—surely suit ill spent and labour ill bestow'd.

DON PEDRO.

Why, what's the matter?

DON JOHN.

I came hither to tell you; and, circumstances shorten'd (for she hath been too long a talking of), the lady is disloyal.⁶

CLAUDIO.

Who, Hero?

DON JOHN.

Even she; Leonato's Hero, your Hero, every man's Hero.

CLAUDIO.

Disloyal!

DON JOHN.

The word is too good to paint out⁷ her wickedness; I could say she were worse: think you of a worse title, and I will fit her to it. Wonder not till further warrant:⁸ go but with me to-night, you shall see her chamber-window enter'd, even the night before her wedding-day: if you love her then, to-morrow wed her; but it would better fit your honour to change your mind.

CLAUDIO.

May this be so?

¹ discover: reveal. ² aim better at me: form a higher opinion of me. ³ holds you well: thinks highly of you. ⁴ in dearness of heart: out of love for you. ⁵ help: helped. ⁶ disloyal: unfaithful. ⁷ paint out: fully describe; depict. ⁸ till further warrant: until further proof appears.

DON PEDRO.

I will not think it.

DON JOHN.

If you dare not trust that¹ you see, confess not that you know: if you will follow me, I will show you enough; and when you have seen more, and heard more, proceed accordingly.

CLAUDIO.

If I see anything to-night why I should not marry her to-morrow, in the congregation, where I should wed her, there will I shame her.

DON PEDRO.

And, as I woo'd for thee to obtain her, I will join thee to disgrace her.

DON JOHN.

I will disparage her no further till you are my witnesses: bear it coldly² but till midnight, and let the issue show itself.

DON PEDRO.

O day untowardly³ turn'd!

CLAUDIO.

O mischief⁴ strangely thwarting!

DON JOHN.

O plague right well prevented! ⁵ so will you say when you have seen the sequel. [Exeunt.]

SCENE III.

A street.

Enter DOGBERRY and his compartner VERGES, with the WATCH.

DOGBERRY.

Are you good men and true?

¹ that: what.

² bear it coldly: keep mum about it.

³ untowardly: perversely.

⁴ mischief: misfortune.

⁵ prevented: avoided.

VERGES.

Yea, or else it were pity but they should suffer salvation,¹ body and soul.

DOGBERRY.

Nay, that were a punishment too good for them, if they should have any allegiance in them, being chosen for the prince's watch.

VERGES.

Well, give them their charge,² neighbour Dogberry.

DOGBERRY.

First, who think you the most desartless³ man to be constable?

FIRST WATCHMAN.

Hugh Oatcake, sir, or George Seacoal; for they can write and read.

DOGBERRY.

Come hither, neighbour Seacoal. God hath blest you with a good name; to be a well-favour'd⁴ man is the gift of fortune; but to write and read comes by nature.

SECOND WATCHMAN.

Both which, master constable,—

DOGBERRY.

You have: I knew it would be your answer. Well, for your favour, sir, why, give God thanks, and make no boast of it; and for your writing and reading, let that appear when there is no need of such vanity. You are thought here to be the most senseless⁵ and fit man for the constable of the watch; therefore bear you the lantern. This is your charge:—you shall comprehend⁶ all vagrom⁷ men; you are to bid any man stand,⁸ in the prince's name.

¹ salvation: damnation. ² charge: instructions. ³ desartless: deserving.
⁴ well-favour'd: good-looking; handsome. ⁵ senseless: sensible.
⁶ comprehend: apprehend; arrest. ⁷ vagrom: vagrant.
⁸ stand: halt.

SECOND WATCHMAN.

How if a' ¹ will not stand?

DOGBERRY.

Why, then, take no note of him, but let him go; and presently call the rest of the watch together, and thank God you are rid of a knave.

VERGES.

If he will not stand when he is bidden, he is none of the prince's subjects.

DOGBERRY.

True, and they are to meddle with none but the prince's subjects.—You shall also make no noise in the streets; for for the watch to babble and talk is most tolerable² and not to be endured.

SECOND WATCHMAN.

We will rather sleep than talk: we know what belongs to a watch.

DOGBERRY.

Why, you speak like an ancient and most quiet watchman; for I cannot see how sleeping should offend: only, have a care that your bills³ be not stolen.—Well, you are to call at all the ale-houses, and bid those that are drunk get them to bed.

SECOND WATCHMAN.

How if they will not?

DOGBERRY.

Why, then, let them alone till they are sober: if they make you not then the better answer, you may say they are not the men you took them for.

SECOND WATCHMAN.

Well, sir.

¹ How if a': what if he.

² tolerable: intolerable.

³ bills: halberds; pikes.

DOGBERRY.

If you meet a thief, you may suspect him, by virtue of your office, to be no true¹ man; and, for such kind of men, the less you meddle or make² with them, why, the more is for your honesty.

SECOND WATCHMAN.

If we know him to be a thief, shall we not lay hands on him?

DOGBERRY.

Truly, by your office, you may; but I think they that touch pitch will be defiled:³ the most peaceable way for you, if you do take a thief, is to let him show himself what he is, and steal out of your company.

VERGES.

You have been always call'd a merciful man, partner.

DOGBERRY.

Truly, I would not hang a dog by my will, much more a man who hath any honesty in him.

VERGES.

If you hear a child cry in the night, you must call to the nurse and bid her still it.

SECOND WATCHMAN.

How if the nurse be asleep and will not hear us?

DOGBERRY.

Why, then, depart in peace, and let the child wake her with crying; for the ewe that will not hear her lamb when it baes will never answer a calf when he bleats.

VERGES.

'Tis very true.

DOGBERRY.

This is the end of the charge:—you, constable, are to pre-

¹ true: honest.

² meddle or make: interfere; a familiar phrase in Shakespeare's time.

³ they that touch pitch . . . defiled: see Ecclesiastes, 13:1—"He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled therewith."

sent¹ the prince's own person: if you meet the prince in the night, you may stay² him.

VERGES.

Nay, by'r lady, that I think a' cannot.

DOGBERRY.

Five shillings to one on't, with any man that knows the statutes,³ he may stay him: marry, not without the prince be willing; for, indeed, the watch ought to offend no man; and it is an offence to stay a man against his will.

VERGES.

By'r lady, I think it be so.

DOGBERRY.

Ha, ah-ha! Well, masters, good night: an there be any matter of weight chances, call up me: keep your fellows' counsels and your own;⁴ and good night.—Come, neighbour.

FIRST WATCHMAN.

Well, masters, we hear our charge: let us go sit here upon the church-bench⁵ till two, and then all to bed.

DOGBERRY.

One word more, honest neighbours. I pray you, watch about Signior Leonato's door; for the wedding being there to-morrow, there is a great coil⁶ to-night. Adieu: be vigilant,⁷ I beseech you.

[*Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES.*]

Enter BORACHIO and CONRADE.

BORACHIO.

What, Conrادل—

FIRST WATCHMAN [*aside*].

Peacel stir not.

¹ present: represent. ² stay: stop. ³ statutes: statutes. ⁴ keep
 . . . own: part of a grand juryman's oath. ⁵ church-bench: bench
 in the porch of a church. ⁶ coil: to-do. ⁷ vigilant: vigilant.

BORACHIO.

Conrade, I say!—

CONRADE.

Here, man; I am at thy elbow.

BORACHIO.

Mass,¹ and my elbow itcht; I thought there would a scab² follow.

CONRADE.

I will owe thee an answer for that: and now forward with thy tale.

BORACHIO.

Stand thee close, then, under this pent-house,³ for it drizzles rain; and I will, like a true drunkard,⁴ utter all to thee.

FIRST WATCHMAN [*aside*].

Some treason, masters: yet stand close.⁵

BORACHIO.

Therefore know I have earn'd of Don John a thousand ducats.

CONRADE.

Is it possible that any villainy should be so dear? ⁶

BORACHIO.

Thou shouldst rather ask, if it were possible any villainy should be so rich; for when rich villains have need of poor ones, poor ones may make what price they will.

CONRADE.

I wonder at it.

BORACHIO.

That shows thou art unconfirm'd.⁷ Thou knowest that the fashion of a doublet, or a hat, or a cloak, is nothing to a man.

CONRADE.

Yes, it is apparel.

¹ Mass: by the mass (a mild oath). ² scab: with a play on the meaning of the word as a contemptible fellow. ³ pent-house: the overhanging roof of a shed or lean-to attached to a house. ⁴ true drunkard: the Spanish word for drunk, or intoxicated, is *borracho*. ⁵ stand close: stay hidden. ⁶ dear: expensive; costly. ⁷ unconfirm'd: inexperienced.

BORACHIO.

I mean, the fashion.

CONRADE.

Yes, the fashion is the fashion.

BORACHIO.

Tush! I may as well say the fool's the fool. But seest thou not what a deform'd ¹ thief this fashion is?

FIRST WATCHMAN [*aside*].

I know that Deform'd; a' has been a vile thief this seven year;² a' goes up and down like a gentleman: I remember his name.

BORACHIO.

Didst thou not hear somebody?

CONRADE.

No; 'twas the vane on the house.

BORACHIO.

Seest thou not, I say, what a deform'd thief this fashion is? how giddily 'a turns about all the hot bloods between fourteen and five-and-thirty? sometimes fashioning them like Pharaoh's soldiers in the reechy³ painting, sometime like god Bel's priests⁴ in the old church-window,⁵ sometime like the shaver Hercules in the smircht⁶ worm-eaten tapestry, where his cod-piece seems as massy as his club?

CONRADE.

All this I see; and I see that the fashion wears out more apparel than the man. But art not thou thyself giddy with the fashion too, that thou hast shifted out of thy tale into telling me of the fashion?

BORACHIO.

Not so, neither: but know that I have to-night woo'd Mar-

¹ deform'd: misshapening. ² this seven year: a common expression for a long time. ³ reechy: smoke-stained. ⁴ god Bel's priests: the threescore and ten priests of Bel in the apocryphal book of Daniel. ⁵ in the old church-window: that is, painted on the stained-glass windows of old churches. ⁶ smircht: soiled.

garët, the Lady Hero's gentlewoman, by the name of Hero: she leans me out at her mistress' chamber-window, bids me a thousand times good night,—I tell this tale vilely:¹—I should first tell thee how the prince, Claudio, and my master, planted and placed and possest² by my master Don John, saw afar off in the orchard this amiable³ encounter.

CONRADE.

And thought they Margaret was Hero?

BORACHIO.

Two of them did, the prince and Claudio; but the devil my master knew she was Margaret; and partly by his oaths, which first possest them, partly by the dark night, which did deceive them, but chiefly by my villainy, which did confirm any slander that Don John had made, away went Claudio enraged; swore he would meet her, as he was appointed, next morning at the temple, and there, before the whole congregation, shame her with what he saw o'ernight, and send her home again without a husband.

FIRST WATCHMAN.

We charge you, in the prince's name, stand!

SECOND WATCHMAN.

Call up the right master constable. We have here recover'd⁴ the most dangerous piece of lechery⁵ that ever was known in the commonwealth.

FIRST WATCHMAN.

And one Deform'd is one of them: I know him; a' wears a lock.⁶

CONRADE.

Masters, masters,—

¹ vilely: badly. ² possest: influenced. ³ amiable: loving. ⁴ recover'd: uncovered. ⁵ lechery: treachery. ⁶ a lock: a love lock (*curl*) on the side of his face (a fashion of the time).

SECOND WATCHMAN.

You'll be made bring Deform'd forth, I warrant you.

CONRADE.

Masters,—

FIRST WATCHMAN.

Never speak: we charge you let us obey¹ you to go with us.

BORACHIO.

We are like to prove a goodly commodity,² being taken up of these men's bills.³

CONRADE.

A commodity in question,⁴ I warrant you.—Come, we'll obey you. [Exeunt.]

SCENE IV.

A room in LEONATO's house.

Enter HERO, MARGARET, and URSULA.

HERO.

Good Ursula, wake my cousin Beatrice, and desire her to rise.

URSULA.

I will, lady.

HERO.

And bid her come hither.

URSULA.

Well.

[Exit.]

MARGARET.

Troth, I think your other rabato⁵ were better.

HERO.

No, pray thee, good Meg, I'll wear this.

MARGARET.

By my troth, 's⁶ not so good; and I warrant your cousin will say so.

¹ obey: persuade.

² a goodly commodity: profitable goods.

³ bills: credit, with a pun on the halberds the watchmen carry.

⁴ in question: subject to question.

⁵ rabato: the wire frame for a ruff (high, stiff collar).

⁶ 's: it is.

HERO.

My cousin's a fool, and thou art another: I'll wear none but this.

MARGARET.

I like the new tire¹ within² excellently, if the hair were a thought³ browner; and your gown's a most rare fashion, i'faith. I saw the Duchess of Milan's gown that they praise so.

HERO.

O, that exceeds,⁴ they say.

MARGARET.

By my troth, 's but a night-gown⁵ in respect of yours,⁶—cloth-o'-gold, and cuts,⁷ and laced with silver, set with pearls, down sleeves,⁸ side sleeves,⁹ and skirts round underborne¹⁰ with a bluish tinsel: but for a fine, quaint,¹¹ graceful, and excellent fashion, yours is worth ten on't.

HERO.

God give me joy to wear it! for my heart is exceeding heavy.

MARGARET.

'Twill be heavier soon by the weight of a man.

HERO.

Fie upon thee! art not ashamed?

MARGARET.

Of what, lady? of speaking honourably? Is not marriage honourable in a beggar? Is not your lord honourable without marriage? I think you would have me say, 'saving your reverence,¹² a husband'; an bad thinking do not wrest¹³ true

¹ tire: headdress; in this case, a wig. ² within: in the other room.
³ thought: shade. ⁴ exceeds: excels. night-gown: dressing gown.
⁵ in respect of yours: compared with yours. ⁷ cuts: lined decorative slashes. ⁸ down sleeves: long sleeves. ⁹ side sleeves: non-confining sleeves hanging from the shoulder.
¹⁰ underborne: lined, and probably stiffened. ¹¹ quaint: elegant. ¹² 'saving your reverence: an apology. ¹³ wrest: twist; distort.

speaking, I'll offend nobody: is there any harm in 'the heavier for a husband'? None, I think, an¹ it be the right husband and the right wife; otherwise 'tis light,² and not heavy: ask my Lady Beatrice else; here she comes.

Enter BEATRICE.

HERO.

Good morrow, coz.

BEATRICE.

Good morrow, sweet Hero.

HERO.

Why, how now! do you speak in the sick tune? ³

BEATRICE.

I am out of all other tune, methinks.

MARGARET.

Clap's into *Light o' love*;⁴ that goes without a burden:⁵ do you sing it, and I'll dance it.

BEATRICE.

Ye light o' love, with your heels!—then, if your husband have stables enough, you'll see he shall lack no barns.⁶

MARGARET.

O illegitimate construction! I scorn that with my heels.

BEATRICE.

'Tis almost five o'clock, cousin; 'tis time you were ready.—By my troth, I am exceeding ill:—heigh-hol

MARGARET.

For a hawk, a horse, or a husband?

BEATRICE.

For the letter that begins them all, H.⁷

MARGARET.

Well, an you be not turn'd Turk,⁸ there's no more sailing by the star.⁹

¹ an: if. ² light: wanton (with a play on weight). ³ sick tune: that is, the weak voice of an invalid. ⁴ *Light o' love*: a popular dance tune. ⁵ burden: refrain. ⁶ barns: with a play on the word *bairns*—children. ⁷ H: the old pronunciation for ache was *aitch*. ⁸ turn'd Turk: turned infidel; renounced your former faith, or had a change of heart. ⁹ star: North Star.

BEATRICE.

What means the fool, trow? ¹

MARGARET.

Nothing I; but God send every one their heart's desire!

HERO.

These gloves the Count sent me; they are an excellent perfume.

BEATRICE.

I am stuf², cousin; I cannot smell.

MARGARET.

A maid, and stuf²! there's goodly catching of cold.

BEATRICE.

O, God help me! God help me! how long have you profest apprehension? ³

MARGARET.

Ever since you left it. Doth not my wit become me rarely?

BEATRICE.

It is not seen enough; you should wear it in your cap.—By my troth, I am sick.

MARGARET.

Get you some of this distill'd Carduus Benedictus,⁴ and lay it to your heart: it is the only thing for a qualm.⁵

HERO.

There thou prick'st her with a thistle.

BEATRICE.

Benedictus! why Benedictus? you have some moral⁶ in this Benedictus.

MARGARET.

Morall no, by my troth, I have no moral meaning; I meant, plain holy-thistle. You may think perchance that I think you

¹ trow: I wonder. ² I am stuf: my nose is stopped up. ³ profest apprehension: set yourself up as a wit. ⁴ Carduus Benedictus: blessed thistle, a medicinal herb (with a pun on *Benedick*). ⁵ a qualm: a sudden attack of illness. ⁶ moral: hidden meaning.

are in love: nay, by'r lady,¹ I am not such a fool to think what I list;² nor I list not to think what I can; nor, indeed, I cannot think, if I would think my heart out of thinking, that you are in love, or that you will be in love, or that you can be in love. Yet Benedick was such another, and now is he become a man: he swore he would never marry; and yet now, in despite of his heart, he eats his meat without grudging: and how you may be converted, I know not; but methinks you look with your eyes as other women do.

BEATRICE.

What pace is this that thy tongue keeps?

MARGARET.

Not a false gallop.³

Enter URSULA.

URSULA.

Madam, withdraw: the prince, the count, Signior Benedick, Don John, and all the gallants of the town, are come to fetch you to church.

HERO.

Help to dress me, good coz, good Meg, good Ursula.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.

Another room in LEONATO's house.

*Enter LEONATO, with the CONSTABLE DOGBERRY and the
HEADBOROUGH⁴ VERGES.*

LEONATO.

What would you with me, honest neighbour?

¹ by'r lady: by Our Lady (the Virgin Mary).

² list: please.

³ Not a false gallop: Margaret means that she is on the right trail.

⁴ HEADBOROUGH: the title of what would now be a local constable.

DOGBERRY.

Marry, sir, I would have some confidence¹ with you that decerns² you nearly.³

LEONATO.

Brief,⁴ I pray you; for you see it is a busy time with me.

DOGBERRY.

Marry, this it is, sir,—

VERGES.

Yes, in truth it is, sir.

LEONATO.

What is it, my good friends?

DOGBERRY.

Goodman Verges, sir, speaks a little off the matter:⁵ an old man, sir, and his wits are not so blunt⁶ as, God help, I would desire they were; but, in faith, honest as the skin between his brows.

VERGES.

Yes, I thank God I am as honest as any man living that is an old man and no honester than I.

DOGBERRY.

Comparisons are odorous:⁷ *palabras*,⁸ neighbour Verges.

LEONATO.

Neighbours, you are tedious.

DOGBERRY.

It pleases your worship to say so, but we are the poor duke's officers;⁹ but truly, for mine own part, if I were as tedious¹⁰ as a king, I could find in my heart to bestow it all of¹¹ your worship.

LEONATO.

All thy tediousness on me, hal

DOGBERRY.

Yea, an 'twere a thousand pound more than 'tis; for I hear as

¹ confidence: conference. ² decerns: concerns. ³ nearly: closely.

⁴ Brief: make it brief. ⁵ off the matter: away from the subject.

⁶ blunt: sharp. ⁷ odorous: odious. ⁸ *palabras*: Spanish *pocas*

palabras—a few words. ⁹ poor duke's officers: duke's poor officers.

¹⁰ tedious: Dogberry takes the word as a compliment. ¹¹ of: on.

good exclamation on¹ your worship as of any man in the city; and though I be but a poor man, I am glad to hear it.

VERGES.

And so am I.

LEONATO.

I would fain know what you have to say.

VERGES.

Marry,² sir, our watch to-night, excepting your worship's presence,³ ha' ta'en a couple of as arrant⁴ knaves as any in Messina.

DOGBERRY.

A good old man, sir; he will be talking: as they say, When the age is in, the wit is out:⁵ God help us! it is a world to see! ⁶—Well said, i'faith, neighbour Verges:—well, God's a good man;⁷ an two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind.—An honest soul, i'faith, sir; by my troth, he is, as ever broke bread: but God is to be worshipt: all men are not alike,—alas, good neighbour!

LEONATO.

Indeed, neighbour, he comes too short of you.

DOGBERRY.

Gifts that God gives.

LEONATO.

I must leave you.

DOGBERRY.

One word, sir: our watch, sir, have indeed comprehended two aspicious⁸ persons, and we would have them this morning examined before your worship.

LEONATO.

Take their examination yourself, and bring it me: I am now

¹ exclamation on: acclamation of. ² Marry: by the Virgin Mary.

³ excepting your worship's presence: an apology. ⁴ arrant: out-and-out. ⁵ When the age . . . out: a blunder for Heywood's proverb: "When ale is in, wit is out."

⁶ a world to see: a wonderful thing to see. ⁷ God's a good man: another proverbial expression.

⁸ aspicious: suspicious.

in great haste, as it may¹ appear unto you.

DOGBERRY.

It shall be suffigance.²

LEONATO.

Drink some wine ere you go: fare you well.

Enter a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

My lord, they stay³ for you to give your daughter to her husband.

LEONATO.

I'll wait upon them: I am ready.

[Exeunt LEONATO and MESSENGER.]

DOGBERRY.

Go, good partner, go, get you to Francis Seacoal; bid him bring his pen and inkhorn⁴ to the gaol: we are now to examination⁵ these men.

VERGES.

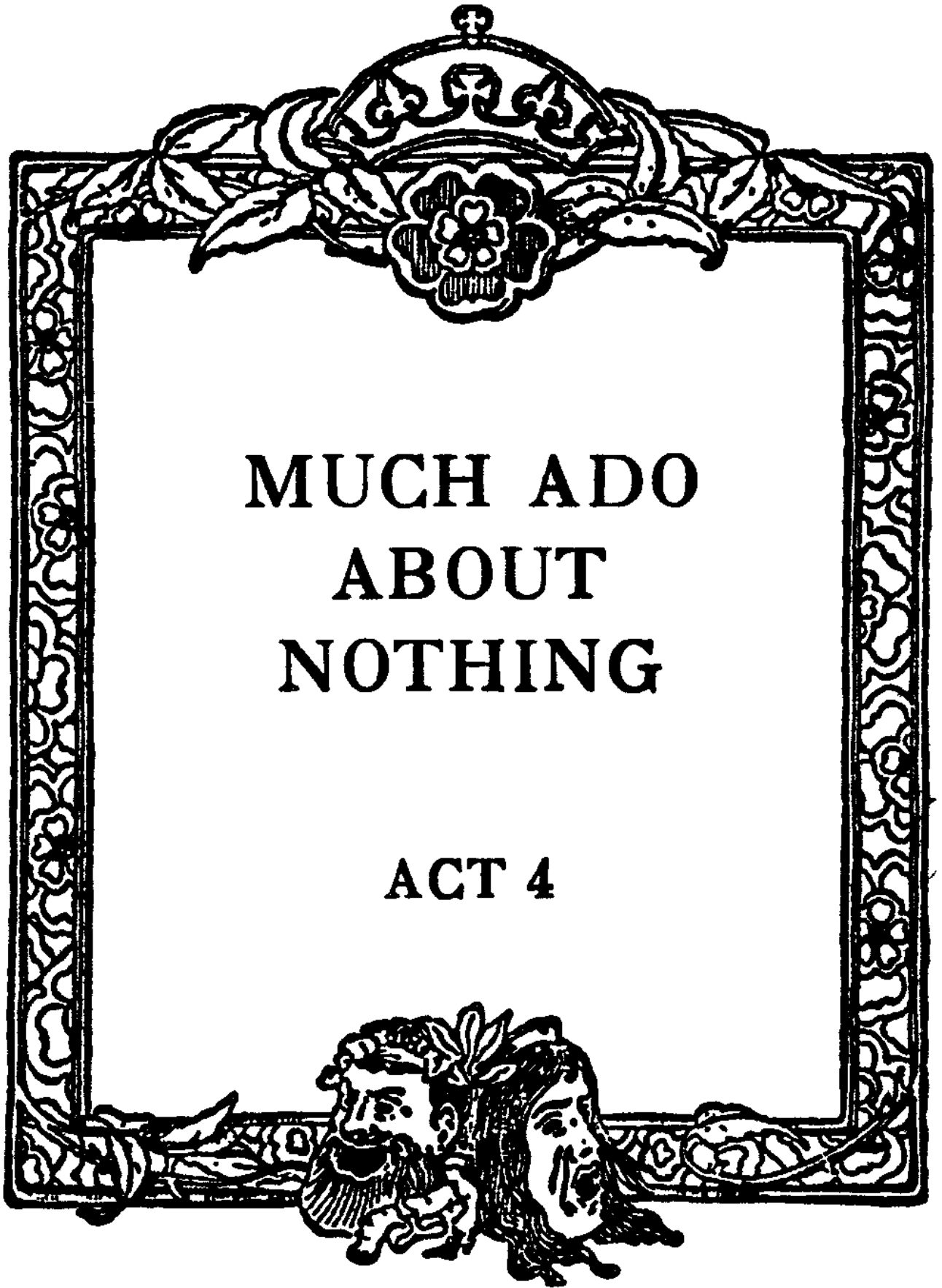
And we must do it wisely.

DOGBERRY.

We will spare for no wit, I warrant you; here's that shall drive some of them to a non-come;⁶ only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication,⁷ and meet me at the gaol.

[Exeunt.]

¹ may: must. ² suffigance: sufficient. ³ stay: wait. ⁴ inkhorn: inkstand. ⁵ examination: examine. ⁶ non-come: Dogberry confuses *non compos* with nonplus. ⁷ excommunication: communication.



**MUCH ADO
ABOUT
NOTHING**

ACT 4

ACT IV

THE SCENE at the church is the climactic scene of the play. Publicly accused of immoral behavior by her intended bridegroom, by Don Pedro, who had been called as a witness, and by Don John, Hero swoons. Friar Francis, feeling that she has been wrongly accused, suggests that they should announce she is dead, and try to learn the truth. The tragedy brings Beatrice and Benedick together. Convinced of Hero's innocence, they pledge their love to each other. Beatrice immediately proposes to put Benedick to the test. "Kill Claudio," she says, and after some demurring, Benedick, swayed by her eloquent defense of her cousin, and by love, agrees. The trial of Borachio and Conrade, comic though it is, marks a further stage in the resolution. Don John's villainy is known to the law and he has himself fled.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A church.

Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, LEONATO, FRIAR FRANCIS,
CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, HERO, BEATRICE, *and* ATTENDANTS.

LEONATO.

Come, Friar Francis, be brief; only to the plain form of marriage, and you shall recount their particular duties afterwards.

FRIAR FRANCIS.

You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady?

CLAUDIO.

No.

LEONATO.

To be married to her:—friar, you come to marry her.

FRIAR FRANCIS.

Lady, you come hither to be married to this count?

HERO.

I do.

FRIAR FRANCIS.

If either of you know any inward impediment why you should not be conjoin'd, I charge you, on your souls, to utter it.¹

CLAUDIO.

Know you any, Hero?

HERO.

None, my lord.

FRIAR FRANCIS.

Know you any, count?

LEONATO.

I dare make his answer,—none.

CLAUDIO.

O, what men dare do! what men may do! what men daily do, not knowing what they do!

BENEDICK.

How now! interjections? ² Why, then, some be of laughing, as, Ah, ha, he!

CLAUDIO.

Stand thee by, friar.—Father, by your leave:

Will you with free and unconstrained soul

¹ If either . . . it: our marriage ceremony has been little changed since Shakespeare's day.

² interjections: examples of interjections from the Latin and English grammars of the period.

Give me this maid, your daughter?

LEONATO.

As freely, son, as God did give her me.

CLAUDIO.

And what have I to give you back, whose worth
May counterpoise¹ this rich and precious gift?

DON PEDRO.

Nothing, unless you render her again.²

CLAUDIO.

Sweet prince, you learn³ me noble thankfulness.—
There, Leonato, take her back again:
Give not this rotten orange to your friend;
She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.—
Behold how like a maid she blushes here!
O, what authority⁴ and show of truth
Can cunning sin cover itself withall
Comes not that blood ⁵ as modest evidence⁶
To witness simple virtue? Would you not swear,
All you that see her, that she were a maid,
By these exterior shows? But she is none:
She knows the heat of a luxurious⁷ bed;
Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

LEONATO.

What do you mean, my lord?

CLAUDIO.

Not to be married, not to knit my soul
To an approved ⁸ wanton.

LEONATO.

Dear my lord, if you, in your own proof,⁹
Have vanquisht the resistance of her youth,
And made defeat of her virginity,—

¹ counterpoise: balance. ² render . . . again: give her back again.
³ learn: teach. ⁴ authority: guarantee. ⁵ blood: blush. ⁶ modest
evidence: evidence of modesty. ⁷ luxurious: lustful. ⁸ approved:
proved. ⁹ in your own proof: in your own trial of her.

CLAUDIO.

I know what you would say: if I have known her,
You will say she did embrace me as a husband,
And so extenuate the 'forehand¹ sin:
No, Leonato,
I never tempted her with word too large;²
But, as a brother to his sister, show'd
Bashful sincerity and comely love.

HERO.

And seem'd I ever otherwise to you?

CLAUDIO.

Out on thee, seeming! I will write against it:
You seem to me as Dian³ in her orb,⁴
As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown;⁵
But you are more intemperate in your blood
Than Venus, or those pamper'd animals
That rage in savage sensuality.

HERO.

Is my lord well, that he doth speak so wide?⁶

CLAUDIO.

Sweet prince, why speak not you?

DON PEDRO.

What should I speak?

I stand dishonour'd, that have gone about⁷
To link my dear friend to a common stale.⁸

LEONATO.

Are these things spoken? or do I but dream?

DON JOHN.

Sir, they are spoken, and these things are true.

BENEDICK.

This looks not like a nuptial.

HERO.

True!—O God!

¹ 'forehand: beforehand (before marriage). ² large: free; licentious.

³ Dian: the chaste Diana of the hunt. ⁴ orb: the moon, of which Diana (Luna) was the goddess. ⁵ blown: in full bloom. ⁶ so wide: so wide of the mark. ⁷ gone about: endeavored. ⁸ stale: strumpet.

CLAUDIO.

Leonato, stand I here?
Is this the prince? is this the prince's brother?
Is this face Hero's? are our eyes our own?

LEONATO.

All this is so: but what of this, my lord?

CLAUDIO.

Let me but move¹ one question to your daughter;
And, by that fatherly and kindly² power
That you have in her, bid her answer truly.

LEONATO.

I charge thee do so, as thou art my child.

HERO.

O, God defend me! how am I beset!—
What kind of catechising call you this?

CLAUDIO.

To make you answer truly to your name.

HERO.

Is it not Hero? Who can blot that name
With any just reproach?

CLAUDIO.

Marry, that can Hero;
Hero itself can blot out Hero's virtue.
What man was he talkt with you yesternight
Out at your window betwixt twelve and one?
Now, if you are a maid, answer to this.

HERO.

I talkt with no man at that hour, my lord.

DON PEDRO.

Why, then are you no maiden.—Leonato,
I am sorry you must hear: upon mine honour,
Myself, my brother, and this grieved³ count
Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night

¹ move: propose.

² kindly: natural.

³ grieved: wronged.

Talk with a ruffian at her chamber-window;
Who hath indeed, most like a liberal ¹ villain,
Confest the vile encounters² they have had
A thousand times in secret.

DON JOHN.

Fie, fie! they are not to be named, my lord,
Not to be spoke of;
There is not chastity enough in language,
Without offence to utter them.—Thus, pretty lady,
I am sorry for thy much misgovernment.³

CLAUDIO.

O Hero, what a Hero hadst thou been,
If half thy outward graces had been placed
About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!
But fare thee well, most foul, most fair! farewell,
Thou pure impiety and impious purity!
For thee I'll lock up all the gates of love,
And on my eyelids shall conjecture⁴ hang,
To turn all beauty into thoughts of harm,⁵
And never shall it more be gracious.⁶

LEONATO.

Hath no man's dagger here a point for me?

[HERO SWOONS.]

BEATRICE.

Why, how now, cousin! wherefore sink you down?

DON JOHN.

Come, let us go. These things, come thus to light,
Smother her spirits up.

[*Exeunt* DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, CLAUDIO, *and* ATTENDANTS.]

BENEDICK.

How doth the lady?

¹ liberal: licentious (in speech).

² encounters: meetings.

³ misgovernment: misconduct.

⁴ conjecture: suspicion.

⁵ thoughts of harm: condemnations.

⁶ gracious: attractive.

BEATRICE.

Dead, I think:—help, uncle:—
 Hero! why, Hero!—uncle!—Signior Benedick!—friar!

LEONATO.

O Fate, take not away thy heavy hand!
 Death is the fairest cover for her shame
 That may be wisht for.

BEATRICE.

How now, cousin Hero!

FRIAR FRANCIS.

Have comfort, lady.

LEONATO.

Dost thou look up?

FRIAR FRANCIS.

Yea, wherefore should she not?

LEONATO.

Wherefore! Why, doth not every earthly thing
 Cry shame upon her? Could she here deny
 The story that is printed in her blood?—
 Do not live, Hero; do not ope thine eyes:
 For, did I think thou wouldst not quickly die,
 Thought I thy spirits¹ were stronger than thy shames,²
 Myself would, on the rearward of reproaches,
 Strike at thy life.³ Grieved I, I had but one? ⁴
 Chid I for that at frugal nature's frame? ⁵
 O, one too much by thee! Why had I one?
 Why ever wast thou lovely in my eyes?
 Why had I not with charitable hand
 Took up a beggar's issue⁶ at my gates,
 Who smirched thus and mired ⁷ with infamy,
 I might have said, 'No part of it is mine;

¹ spirits: animal spirits. ² shames: sense of shame. ³ on the rearward . . . life: kill you after denouncing you for your shame.
⁴ one: one child. ⁵ frame: plan of things. ⁶ issue: offspring.
⁷ mired: soiled.

This shame derives itself from unknown loins?
But mine, and mine I loved, and mine I praised,
And mine that I was proud on;¹ mine so much
That² I myself was to myself not mine,
Valuing of her;³ why, she—O, she is fall'n
Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea
Hath drops too few to wash her clean again,
And salt too little which may season⁴ give
To her foul-tainted flesh!

BENEDICK.

Sir, sir, be patient.

For my part, I am so attired⁵ in wonder,
I know not what to say.

BEATRICE.

O, on my soul, my cousin is belied!⁶

BENEDICK.

Lady, were you her bedfellow last night?

BEATRICE.

No, truly, not; although, until last night,
I have this twelvemonth been her bedfellow.

LEONATO.

Confirm'd, confirm'd! O, that is stronger made
Which was before barr'd up with ribs of iron!
Would the two princes lie? and Claudio lie,
Who loved her so, that, speaking of her foulness,
Washt it with tears? Hence from her! let her die.

FRIAR FRANCIS.

Hear me a little;
For I have only been silent so long,
And given way unto this course of fortune,
By noting of the lady: I have markt
A thousand blushing apparitions⁷

¹ on: of. ² That: so that. ³ mine so much . . . her: that is, I thought more of her than I did of myself. ⁴ season: preservation.
⁵ attired: wrapped up. ⁶ belied: lied about. ⁷ blushing apparitions: shows of blushing.

To start into her face; a thousand innocent shames
In angel whiteness beat away those blushes;
And in her eye there hath appear'd a fire,
To burn the errors that these princes hold
Against her maiden truth. Call me a fool;
Trust not my reading nor my observations,
Which with experimental seal doth warrant
The tenour of my book;¹ trust not my age,
My reverence,² calling, nor divinity,
If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here
Under some biting³ error.

LEONATO.

Friar, it cannot be.

Thou see'st that all the grace that she hath left
Is that she will not add to her damnation
A sin of perjury; she not denies it:⁴
Why seek'st thou, then, to cover with excuse
That which appears in proper nakedness?

FRIAR FRANCIS.

Lady, what man is he you are accused of?

HERO.

They know that do accuse me; I know none:
If I know more of any man alive
Than that which maiden modesty doth warrant,
Let all my sins lack mercy!—O my father,
Prove you⁵ that any man with me conversed
At hours unmeet, or that I yesternight
Maintain'd the change of words with any creature,
Refuse me, hate me, torture me to death!

FRIAR FRANCIS.

There is some strange misprision⁶ in the princes.

¹ my observations . . . book: that his, his observations of life confirm what he has learned from books. ² reverence: the respect due his calling. ³ biting: cruel. ⁴ she not denies it: she does not deny it. ⁵ Prove you: if you can prove. ⁶ misprision: misapprehension; misunderstanding.

BENEDICK.

Two of them have the very bent of honour;¹
And if their wisdoms be misled in this,
The practice² of it lives in John the bastard,
Whose spirits toil in frame of ³ villainies.

LEONATO.

I know not. If they speak but truth of her,
These hands shall tear her; if they wrong her honour,
The proudest of them shall well hear of it.
Time hath not yet so dried this blood of mine,
Nor age so eat up my invention,⁴
Nor fortune made such havoc of my means,
Nor my bad life reft⁵ me so much of friends,
But they shall find, awaked in such a kind,⁶
Both strength of limb and policy of mind,
Ability in means and choice of friends,
To quit me of them thoroughly.⁷

FRIAR FRANCIS.

Pause awhile,

And let my counsel sway you in this case.
Your daughter here the princes left for dead,
Let her awhile be secretly kept in,
And publish it that she is dead indeed;
Maintain a mourning ostentation,⁸
And on your family's old monument
Hang mournful epitaphs, and do all rites
That appertain unto a burial.

LEONATO.

What shall become⁹ of this? what will this do?

FRIAR FRANCIS.

Marry, this, well carried, shall on her behalf
Change slander to remorse;¹⁰—that is some good:

¹ the very bent of honour: "the utmost degree of honor"—Samuel Johnson. ² practice: trickery. ³ frame of: devising; framing.
⁴ invention: mental powers. ⁵ reft: bereft. ⁶ in such a kind: to such a degree. ⁷ To quit . . . thoroughly: to repay them thoroughly. ⁸ a mourning ostentation: an outward show of mourning.
⁹ become: be the outcome. ¹⁰ remorse: pity.

But not for that dream I on this strange course,
 But on this travail look for greater birth.
 She dying, as it must be so maintain'd,
 Upon the instant that she was accused,
 Shall be lamented, pitied, and excused
 Of every hearer: for it so falls out,¹
 That what we have we prize not to the worth
 Whiles² we enjoy it; but being lackt and lost,
 Why, then we rack³ the value, then we find
 The virtue that possession would not show us
 Whiles it was ours. So will it fare with Claudio:
 When he shall hear she died upon his words,
 Th'idea of her life⁴ shall sweetly creep
 Into his study of imagination;⁵
 And every lovely organ⁶ of her life
 Shall come apparell'd in more precious habit,⁷
 More moving-delicate⁸ and full of life,
 Into the eye and prospect of his soul,
 Than when she lived indeed; then shall he mourn
 (If ever love had interest in his liver),⁹
 And wish he had not so accused her,—
 No, though he thought his accusation true.
 Let this be so, and doubt not but success¹⁰
 Will fashion the event¹¹ in better shape
 Than I can lay it down in likelihood.
 But if all aim but this be levell'd false,
 The supposition of the lady's death
 Will quench the wonder of her infamy:
 And if it sort not well,¹² you may conceal her
 (As best befits her wounded reputation)
 In some reclusive¹³ and religious life,
 Out of all eyes, tongues, minds, and injuries.

¹ falls out: turns out. ² Whiles: while. ³ rack: exaggerate; stretch. ⁴ Th'idea . . . her life: her image when alive. ⁵ study of imagination: imaginative reflections. ⁶ organ: faculty. ⁷ habit: dress; attire. ⁸ moving-delicate: delicately moving. ⁹ liver: the seat of love. ¹⁰ success: that which is to come after. ¹¹ event: result. ¹² sort not well: does not turn out well. ¹³ reclusive: retired.

BENEDICK.

Signior Lèonato, let the friar advise you:
And though you know my inwardness and love¹
Is very much unto the prince and Claudio,
Yet, by mine honour, I will deal in this
As secretly and justly as your soul
Should with your body.

LEONATO.

Being that² I flow in grief,³
The smallest twine may lead me.⁴

FRIAR FRANCIS.

'Tis well consented: presently⁵ away;
For to strange sores strangely they strain the cure.—⁶
Come, lady, die to live: this wedding-day
Perhaps is but prolong'd:⁷ have patience and endure.
[Exeunt FRIAR FRANCIS, HERO, and LEONATO.]

BENEDICK.

Lady Beatrice, have you wept all this while?

BEATRICE.

Yea, and I will weep a while longer.

BENEDICK.

I will not desire that.

BEATRICE.

You have no reason; I do it freely.⁸

BENEDICK.

Surely I do believe your fair cousin is wrong'd.

BEATRICE.

Ah, how much might the man deserve of me that would right her!

BENEDICK.

Is there any way to show such friendship?

¹ inwardness and love: deep affection. ² Being that: since. ³ flow in grief: am deluged in tears. ⁴ The smallest . . . me: that is, he is willing to let anyone do the thinking for him. ⁵ presently: immediately. ⁶ to strange sores . . . cure: "Extreme remedies are very appropriate for extreme diseases."—Hippocrates: *Aphorism i.* ⁷ prolong'd: postponed. ⁸ freely: without your asking.

BEATRICE.

A very even¹ way, but no such friend.

BENEDICK.

May² a man do it?

BEATRICE.

It is a man's office, but not yours.

BENEDICK.

I do love nothing in the world so well as you: is not that strange?

BEATRICE.

As strange as the thing I know not. It were as possible for me to say I loved nothing so well as you: but believe me not; and yet I lie not; I confess nothing, nor I deny nothing.—I am sorry for my cousin.

BENEDICK.

By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.

BEATRICE.

Do not swear by it, and eat it.³

BENEDICK.

I will swear by it that you love me; and I will make him eat it that says I love not you.

BEATRICE.

Will you not eat your word?

BENEDICK.

With no sauce that can be devised to it. I protest I love thee.

BEATRICE.

Why, then, God forgive me!

BENEDICK.

What offence, sweet Beatrice?

BEATRICE.

You have stay'd me⁴ in a happy hour:⁵ I was about to protest I loved you.

¹ even: easy.

² May: can.

³ and eat it: that is, be forced to eat your words.

⁴ stay'd me: stopped me.

⁵ in a happy hour: in good time; luckily.

BENEDICK.

And do it with all thy heart.

BEATRICE.

I love you with so much of my heart, that none is left to protest.

BENEDICK.

Come, bid me do any thing for thee.

BEATRICE.

Kill Claudio.

BENEDICK.

Hal not for the wide world.

BEATRICE.

You kill me to deny it. Farewell.

BENEDICK.

Tarry, sweet Beatrice.

BEATRICE.

I am gone, though I am here:¹—there is no love in you:—nay, I pray you, let me go.

BENEDICK.

Beatrice,—

BEATRICE.

In faith, I will go.

BENEDICK.

We'll be friends first.

BEATRICE.

You dare easier be friends with me than fight with mine enemy.

BENEDICK.

Is Claudio thine enemy?

BEATRICE.

Is he not approved² in the height³ a villain, that hath slander'd, scorn'd, dishonour'd my kinswoman?—O that I

¹ I am . . . here: that is, her body is here, but her heart is elsewhere.

² approved: proved.

³ in the height: in the highest degree.

were a man!—What, bear her in hand¹ until they come to take hands; and then, with public accusation, uncover'd slander, unmitigated rancour,—O God, that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market-place.

BENEDICK.

Hear me, Beatrice,—

BEATRICE.

Talk with a man out at a window!—a proper² saying!

BENEDICK.

Nay, but, Beatrice,—

BEATRICE.

Sweet Hero!—she is wrong'd, she is slander'd, she is undone.

BENEDICK.

Beat—

BEATRICE.

Princes and counties!³ Surely, a princely testimony, a goodly count, Count Comfect;⁴ a sweet gallant, surely! O that I were a man for his sake! or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake! But manhood is melted into curtsies,⁵ valour into compliment,⁶ and men are only turn'd into tongue, and trim⁷ ones too: he is now as valiant as Hercules that only tells a lie, and swears it.—I cannot be a man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.

BENEDICK.

Tarry, good Beatrice. By this hand, I love thee.

BEATRICE.

Use it for my love some other way than swearing by it.

¹ bear her in hand: delude her into thinking he was going to marry her. ² proper: fine (ironic). ³ counties: counts. ⁴ Count Comfect: a candy count. ⁵ curtsies: mere forms of courtesy. ⁶ compliment: politeness. ⁷ trim: fine (ironic).

BENEDICK.

Think you in your soul the Count Claudio hath wrong'd Hero?

BEATRICE.

Yea, as sure as I have a thought or a soul.

BENEDICK.

Enough, I am engaged;¹ I will challenge him. I will kiss your hand, and so I leave you. By this hand, Claudio shall render me a dear account.² As you hear of me, so think of me. Go, comfort your cousin: I must say she is dead: and so, farewell.
[Exeunt.]

SCENE II.

A prison.

Enter DOGBERRY and VERGES, and SEXTON, in gowns; and the WATCH, with CONRADE and BORACHIO.

DOGBERRY.

Is our whole dissembly³ appear'd?

VERGES.

O, a stool and a cushion for the sexton.

SEXTON.

Which be the malefactors?

DOGBERRY.

Marry, that am I and my partner.

VERGES.

Nay, that's certain; we have the exhibition⁴ to examine.

SEXTON.

But which are the offenders that are to be examined? let them come before master constable.

¹ engaged: pledged—to challenge Claudio.

² render . . . dear account: shall pay dearly to me for his insult to Hero.

³ dissembly: assembly.

⁴ exhibition: commission.

DOGBERRY.

Yea, marry, let them come before me.—What is your name, friend?

BORACHIO.

Borachio.

DOGBERRY.

Pray, write down—Borachio.—Yours, sirrah?

CONRADE.

I am a gentleman, sir, and my name is Conrade.

DOGBERRY.

Write down—master gentleman Conrade.—
Masters, do you serve God?

CONRADE *and* BORACHIO.

Yea, sir, we hope.

DOGBERRY.

Write down—that they hope they serve God:—and write God first; for God defend¹ but God should go before such villains!—Masters, it is proved already that you are little better than false knaves; and it will go near to be thought so shortly. How answer you for yourselves?

CONRADE.

Marry, sir, we say we are none.

DOGBERRY.

A marvellous witty fellow, I assure you; but I will go about with him.²—Come you hither, sirrah: a word in your ear, sir; I say to you, it is thought you are false knaves.

BORACHIO.

Sir, I say to you we are none.

DOGBERRY.

Well, stand aside.—'Fore God, they are both in a tale.³ Have you writ down—that they are none?

¹ defend: forbid.

² I will . . . him: he shall meet his match in me.

³ they are both in a tale: they tell the same story.

SEXTON.

Master constable, you go not the way to examine: you must call forth the watch that are their accusers.

DOGBERRY.

Yea, marry, that's the eftest¹ way.—Let the watch come forth.—Masters, I charge you, in the prince's name, accuse these men.

FIRST WATCHMAN.

This man said, sir, that Don John, the prince's brother, was a villain.

DOGBERRY.

Write down—Prince John a villain.—Why, this is flat² perjury, to call a prince's brother villain.

BORACHIO.

Master constable,—

DOGBERRY.

Pray thee, fellow, peace: I do not like thy look, I promise thee.

SEXTON.

What heard you him say else?

SECOND WATCHMAN.

Marry, that he had received a thousand ducats of ³ Don John for accusing the Lady Hero wrongfully.

DOGBERRY.

Flat burglary as ever was committed.

VERGES.

Yea, by th'mass, that it is.

SEXTON.

What else, fellow?

FIRST WATCHMAN.

And that Count Claudio did mean, upon⁴ his words, to disgrace Hero before the whole assembly, and not marry her.

¹ eftest: deftest; easiest.

² flat: downright.

³ of: from.

⁴ upon: in consequence of.

DOGBERRY.

O villain! thou wilt be condemn'd into everlasting redemption¹ for this.

SEXTON.

What else?

SECOND WATCHMAN.

This is all.

SEXTON.

And this is more, masters, than you can deny. Prince John is this morning secretly stolen away; Hero was in this manner accused, in this very manner refused, and upon the grief of this suddenly died.—Master constable, let these men be bound, and brought to Leonato's: I will go before and show him their examination. [Exit.

DOGBERRY.

Come, let them be opinion'd.²

VERGES.

Let them be in the hands—

CONRADE.

Off, coxcomb! ³

DOGBERRY.

God's my life, where's the sexton? let him write down—the prince's officer, coxcomb.—Come, bind them.—Thou naughty⁴ varlet! ⁵

CONRADE.

Away! you are an ass, you are an ass.

DOGBERRY.

Dost thou not suspect⁶ my place? dost thou not suspect my years?—O that he were here to write me down an ass!—but, masters, remember that I am an ass; though it be not written

¹ redemption: damnation.

² opinion'd: pinioned; fettered.

³ coxcomb: fool.

⁴ naughty: wicked (used with a much stronger meaning than now).

⁵ varlet: knave.

⁶ suspect: respect.

down, yet forget not that I am an ass.—No, thou villain, thou art full of piety,¹ as shall be proved upon thee by good witness. I am a wise fellow; and, which is more, an officer; and, which is more, a householder; and, which is more, as pretty a piece of flesh as any in Messina; and one that knows the law, go to; and a rich fellow enough, go to; find a fellow that hath had losses;² and one that hath two gowns, and every thing handsome about him.—Bring him away.—O that I had been writ down an ass!

[*Exeunt.*]

¹ piety: impiety.

² hath . . . losses: Dogberry means that he would have amounted to even more in the world if he had not had losses (misfortunes).

**MUCH ADO
ABOUT
NOTHING**

ACT 5

ACT V

LEONATO, ignorant of the truth, laments his daughter's slander and death, and both he and his brother Antonio try to challenge Claudio. Claudio and Don Pedro, who is with him, dismiss them, but are surprised when Benedick also issues a challenge and refuses to be mollified by their cheerful reference to Beatrice. Next they meet Borachio, under arrest, who confesses the whole villainy. Claudio, bitterly remorseful, then approaches Leonato. He agrees to atone by informing the people of Messina of Hero's innocence, by participating in a penitential ritual at her tomb, and by marrying a niece who is very much like Hero. Meanwhile, Beatrice and Benedick continue their wooing with affectionate teasing and are overjoyed to hear that Hero's name has been cleared. After performing the penitential rites, Claudio comes to wed Leonato's niece. He is speechless when Hero unveils and reveals her identity to him. The other pair of lovers resume their banter, discovering that their friends have egged them on in their romance. But when they try to dissemble their love, they are confronted with visible proofs of their mutual affection. Benedick declares for marriage, and the play ends with a dance.

ACT V. SCENE I.

Before LEONATO's house.

Enter LEONATO and his brother ANTONIO.

ANTONIO.

If you go on thus, you will kill yourself;
And 'tis not wisdom thus to second ¹ grief
Against yourself.

LEONATO.

I pray thee, cease thy counsel,
Which falls into mine ears as profitless
As water in a sieve: give not me counsel;
Nor let no comforter delight mine ear
But such a one whose wrongs do suit² with mine.
Bring me a father that so loved his child,
Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,
And bid him speak of patience;
Measure his woe the length and breadth of mine,
And let it answer every strain for strain,³
As thus for thus, and such a grief for such,
In every lineament,⁴ branch, shape, and form:

¹ **second**: assist; reinforce.

² **suit**: correspond.

³ **strain**: excessive emotion.

⁴ **lineament**: feature.

If such a one will smile, and stroke his beard,
 Bid sorrow wag,¹ cry 'hem' ² when he should groan,
 Patch³ grief with proverbs, make misfortune drunk
 With candle-wasters,⁴—bring him yet to me,
 And I of him will gather patience.

But there is no such man: for, brother, men
 Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
 Which they themselves not feel; but, tasting it,
 Their counsel turns to passion,⁵ which before
 Would give preceptual medicine⁶ to rage,
 Fetter strong madness in a silken thread,
 Charm ache with air, and agony with words:
 No, no, 'tis all men's office⁷ to speak patience
 To those that wring⁸ under the load of sorrow,
 But no man's virtue nor sufficiency
 To be so moral ⁹ when he shall endure
 The like himself. Therefore give me no counsel:
 My griefs cry louder than advertisement.¹⁰

ANTONIO.

Therein do men from children nothing differ.

LEONATO.

I pray thee, peace,—I will be flesh and blood;
 For there was never yet philosopher
 That could endure the toothache patiently,
 However¹¹ they have writ the style of gods,¹²
 And made a push at chance and sufferance.¹³

ANTONIO.

Yet bend not all the harm upon yourself;
 Make those that do offend you suffer too.

LEONATO.

There thou speak'st reason: nay, I will do so.
 My soul doth tell me Hero is belied;

¹ wag: pack off. ² cry 'hem': a drinker's exclamation—"bottoms up." ³ Patch: cover up. ⁴ With candle-wasters: that is, with the moral precepts of scholars. ⁵ passion: sorrow. ⁶ preceptual medicine: the medicine of counsel. ⁷ 'tis all men's office: every man thinks it is his duty. ⁸ wring: writhe. ⁹ moral: ready to moralize. ¹⁰ advertisement: advice. ¹¹ However: no matter how much. ¹² the style of gods: in an exalted fashion. ¹³ made . . . sufferance: pretended that they were above ill luck and pain.

And that shall Claudio know; so shall the prince,
And all of them that thus dishonour her.

ANTONIO.

Here comes the prince and Claudio hastily.

Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO.

DON PEDRO.

Good den, good den.

CLAUDIO.

Good day to both of you.

LEONATO.

Hear you, my lords,—

DON PEDRO.

We have some haste, Leonato.

LEONATO.

Some haste, my lord!—well, fare you well, my lord:—
Are you so hasty now?—well, all is one.¹

DON PEDRO.

Nay, do not quarrel with us, good old man.

ANTONIO.

If he could right himself with quarrelling,
Some of us would lie low.

CLAUDIO.

Who wrongs him?

LEONATO.

Marry,² thou dost wrong me; thou dissembler, thou:—
Nay, never lay thy hand upon thy sword;
I fear thee not.

CLAUDIO.

Marry, beshrew³ my hand,
If it should give your age such cause of fear:
In faith, my hand meant nothing to my sword.⁴

¹ all is one: it doesn't matter.

² Marry: by the Virgin Mary.

³ beshrew: curse.

⁴ meant nothing to my sword: that is, his hand touched his sword unintentionally.

LEONATO.

Tush, tush, man; never fleer¹ and jest at me:
I speak not like a dotard nor a fool,
As, under privilege of age, to brag
What I have done, being young, or what would do,
Were I not old. Know, Claudio, to thy head,²
Thou hast so wrong'd mine innocent child and me,
That I am forced to lay my reverence³ by,
And, with grey hairs and bruise of many days,
Do challenge thee to trial of a man.
I say thou hast belied mine innocent child;
Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart,
And she lies buried with her ancestors,—
O, in a tomb where never scandal slept,
Save this of hers, framed ⁴ by thy villainy!

CLAUDIO.

My villainy!

LEONATO.

Thine, Claudio; thine, I say.

DON PEDRO.

You say not right, old man.

LEONATO.⁵

My lord, my lord,

I'll prove it on his body, if he dare,
Despite his nice fence⁶ and his active practice,
His May of youth⁶ and bloom of lustihood.⁷

CLAUDIO.

Away! I will not have to do with you.

LEONATO.

Canst thou so daff me? ⁸ Thou hast kill'd my child;
If thou kill'st me, boy,⁹ thou shalt kill a man.

¹ fleer: sneer. ² to thy head: to your face. ³ reverence: the privilege due age. ⁴ framed: fabricated. ⁵ nice fence: skill in fencing. ⁶ May of youth: bloom of youth. ⁷ lustihood: manhood; vigor. ⁸ daff me: doff me; put me aside. ⁹ boy: an insult.

ANTONIO.

He shall kill two of us, and men indeed:
But that's no matter; let him kill one first;—
Win me and wear me,¹—let him answer me.—²
Come, follow me, boy; come, sir boy, come, follow me:
Sir boy, I'll whip you from your foining³ fence;
Nay, as I am a gentleman, I will.

LEONATO.

Brother,—

ANTONIO.

Content yourself.⁴ God knows I loved my niece;
And she is dead, slander'd to death by villains,
That dare as well answer a man indeed
As I dare take a serpent by the tongue;
Boys, apes,⁵ braggarts, Jacks,⁶ milksops!

LEONATO.

Brother Antony,—

ANTONIO.

Hold you content. What, man! I know them, yea,
And what they weigh, even to the utmost scruple,—⁷
Scrambling, out-facing,⁸ fashion-mong'ring⁹ boys,
That lie, and cog,¹⁰ and flout, deprave,¹¹ and slander,
Go antickly,¹² show outward hideousness,
And speak off half a dozen dangerous¹³ words,
How they might hurt their enemies, if they durst;
And this is all.

LEONATO.

But, brother Antony,—

ANTONIO.

Come, 'tis no matter:
Do not you meddle; let me deal in this.

¹ Win . . . me: a challenge. ² answer me: accept my challenge.
³ foining: thrusting (position in fencing). ⁴ Content yourself:
stay out of this. ⁵ apes: jackanapes. ⁶ Jacks: a term of con-
tempt; knaves. ⁷ scruple: smallest weight. ⁸ out-facing: impu-
dent. ⁹ fashion-mong'ring: foppish. ¹⁰ cog: "To deceive, espe-
cially by smooth lies"—Schmidt. ¹¹ deprave: speak ill of. ¹² an-
tickly: like buffoons. ¹³ dangerous: threatening.

DON PEDRO.

Gentlemen both, we will not wake¹ your patience.
My heart is sorry for your daughter's death:
But, on my honour, she was charged with nothing
But what was true, and very full of proof.²

LEONATO.

My lord, my lord,—

DON PEDRO.

I will not hear you.

LEONATO.

No?—

Come, brother, away.—I will be heard.

ANTONIO.

And shall,

Or some of us will smart for't.

[Exeunt LEONATO and ANTONIO.]

DON PEDRO.

See, see; here comes the man we went to seek.

Enter BENEDICK.

CLAUDIO.

Now, signior, what news?

BENEDICK.

Good day, my lord.

DON PEDRO.

Welcome, signior: you are almost come to part almost a fray.

CLAUDIO.

We had like to have had³ our two noses snapt off with two
old men without teeth.

DON PEDRO.

Leonato and his brother. What think'st thou? Had we fought,
I doubt⁴ we should have been too young for them.

¹ wake: excite; disturb.

² full of proof: fully proved.

³ had like . . . had: almost had.

⁴ doubt: suspect.

BENEDICK.

In a false¹ quarrel there is no true valour. I came to seek you both.

CLAUDIO.

We have been up and down to seek thee; for we are high-proof² melancholy, and would fain have it beaten away. Wilt thou use thy wit?

BENEDICK.

It is in my scabbard: shall I draw it?

DON PEDRO.

Dost thou wear thy wit by thy side?

CLAUDIO.

Never any did so, though very many have been beside their wit.—I will bid thee draw, as we do the minstrels;³ draw, to pleasure us.

DON PEDRO.

As I am an honest man, he looks pale.—Art thou sick, or angry?

CLAUDIO.

What, courage, man! What though care kill'd a cat, thou hast mettle⁴ enough in thee to kill care.

BENEDICK.

Sir, I shall meet your wit in the career,⁵ and you charge it against me. I pray you choose another subject.

CLAUDIO.

Nay, then, give him another staff:⁷ this last was broke cross.

DON PEDRO.

By this light,⁸ he changes more and more: I think he be angry indeed.

CLAUDIO.

If he be, he knows how to turn his girdle.⁹

¹ false: unjustified. ² high-proof: in a high degree. ³ minstrels: musicians (draw their bows). ⁴ mettle: ardent spirit. ⁵ career: a charge in a tilting match. ⁶ an: if. ⁷ staff: lance. ⁸ By this light: a common oath. ⁹ turn his girdle: to turn the buckle of one's belt to the back constituted a challenge.

BENEDICK.

Shall I speak a word in your ear?

CLAUDIO.

God bless¹ me from a challenge!

BENEDICK.

You are a villain;—I jest not:—I will make it good² how³ you dare, with what you dare, and when you dare.—Do me right,⁴ or I will protest your cowardice. You have kill'd a sweet lady, and her death shall fall heavy on you. Let me hear from you.

CLAUDIO.

Well, I will meet you, so I may have good cheer.⁵

DON PEDRO.

What, a feast? a feast?

CLAUDIO.

I'faith, I thank him; he hath bid me to a calf's-head⁶ and a capon; the which if I do not carve most curiously,⁷ say my knife's naught.—Shall I not find a woodcock⁸ too?

BENEDICK.

Sir, your wit ambles well; it goes easily.

DON PEDRO.

I'll tell thee how Beatrice praised thy wit the other day. I said, thou hadst a fine wit: 'True,' says she, 'a fine little one.' 'No,' said I, 'a great wit:' 'Right,' says she, 'a great gross one.' 'Nay,' said I, 'a good wit:' 'Just,' said she, 'it hurts nobody.' 'Nay,' said I, 'the gentleman is wise:' 'Certain,' said she, 'a wise gentleman.'⁹ 'Nay,' said I, 'he hath the tongues:' 'That I believe,' said she, 'for he swore a thing to me on Monday night, which he forswore on Tuesday morning; there's

¹ bless: preserve. ² make it good: prove it. ³ how: in whatever way. ⁴ Do me right: give me satisfaction. ⁵ cheer: food.
⁶ calf's-head: fool. ⁷ curiously: skillfully; nicely. ⁸ woodcock: a bird with little sense; hence, simpleton. ⁹ 'a wise gentleman': used ironically.

a double tongue; there's two tongues.' Thus did she, an hour together, trans-shape¹ thy particular virtues: yet at last she concluded with a sigh, thou wast the properest² man in Italy.

CLAUDIO.

For the which she wept heartily, and said she cared not.

DON PEDRO.

Yea, that she did; but yet, for all that, an if³ she did not hate him deadly,⁴ she would love him dearly:—the old man's daughter told us all.

CLAUDIO.

All, all; and, moreover, God saw him when he was hid in the garden.⁵

DON PEDRO.

But when shall we set the savage bull's horns on the sensible Benedick's head?

CLAUDIO.

Yea, and text underneath, 'Here dwells Benedick, the married man'?

BENEDICK.

Fare you well, boy: you know my mind. I will leave you now to your gossip-like⁶ humour: you break jests as braggarts do their blades, which, God be thank'd, hurt not.—My lord, for your many courtesies I thank you: I must discontinue your company: your brother the bastard is fled from Messina: you have among you kill'd a sweet and innocent lady. For my Lord Lackbeard there, he and I shall meet: and till then peace be with him. [Exit.

DON PEDRO.

He is in earnest.

¹ trans-shape: spell backward; caricature.

² properest: handsomest.

³ an if: if.

⁴ deadly: implacably.

⁵ God in garden: an allusion to Genesis 3:8.

⁶ gossip-like: tattling.

CLAUDIO.

In most profound earnest; and, I'll warrant you, for the love of Beatrice.

DON PEDRO.

And hath challenged thee.

CLAUDIO.

Most sincerely.

DON PEDRO.

What a pretty thing man is when he goes in his doublet and hose,¹ and leaves off his wit!

CLAUDIO.

He is then a giant to an ape: but then is an ape a doctor² to³ such a man.

DON PEDRO.

But, soft you,⁴ let me be: pluck up, my heart, and be sad! ⁵ Did he not say, my brother was fled?

Enter DOGBERRY and VERGES, and the WATCH, with CONRADE and BORACHIO.

DOGBERRY.

Come, you, sir: if justice cannot tame you, she shall ne'er weigh more reasons⁶ in her balance:⁷ nay, an you be a cursing hypocrite once, you must be lookt to.

DON PEDRO.

How now! two of my brother's men bound! Borachio one!

CLAUDIO.

Hearken after⁸ their offence, my lord.

DON PEDRO.

Officers, what offence have these men done?

DOGBERRY.

Marry, sir, they have committed false report; moreover, they have spoken untruths; secondarily, they are slanders; sixth and

¹ doublet and hose: that is, without his cloak. ² doctor: learned man. ³ to: in comparison with. ⁴ soft you: slow down. ⁵ pluck . . . sad: rouse yourself, my heart, (friend) and be serious. ⁶ reasons: legal cases, with a pun on raisins, pronounced the same as reasons. ⁷ in her balance: on her scales. ⁸ Hearken after: inquire concerning.

lastly, they have belied a lady; thirdly, they have verified unjust things; and, to conclude, they are lying knaves.

DON PEDRO.

First, I ask thee what they have done; thirdly, I ask thee what's their offence; sixth and lastly, why they are committed: and, to conclude, what you lay to their charge.

CLAUDIO.

Rightly reason'd, and in his own division;¹ and, by my troth, there's one meaning well suited.²

DON PEDRO.

Who³ have you offended, masters, that you are thus bound to your answer? ⁴ this learned constable is too cunning⁵ to be understood: what's your offence?

BORACHIO.

Sweet prince, let me go no further to mine answer: do you hear me, and let this count kill me. I have deceived even your very eyes: what your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light; who, in the night, overheard me confessing to this man, how Don John your brother incensed⁶ me to slander the Lady Hero; how you were brought into the orchard, and saw me court Margaret in Hero's garments; how you disgraced her, when you should marry her: my villainy they have upon record; which I had rather seal⁷ with my death than repeat over to my shame. The lady is dead upon⁸ mine and my master's false accusation; and, briefly, I desire nothing but the reward of a villain.

¹division: arrangement. ²one meaning well-suited: one meaning dressed in several different ways. ³Who: whom. ⁴to your answer: to answer for your conduct. ⁵cunning: knowing; wise (ironic). ⁶incensed: instigated. ⁷seal: confirm. ⁸upon: because of.

DON PEDRO.

Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

CLAUDIO.

I have drunk poison whiles¹ he utter'd it.

DON PEDRO.

But did my brother set thee on to this?

BORACHIO.

Yea, and paid me richly for the practice² of it.

DON PEDRO.

He is composed and framed³ of treachery:

And fled he is upon this villainy.

CLAUDIO.

Sweet Hero! now thy image doth appear

In the rare semblance that I loved it first.⁴

DOGBERRY.

Come, bring away the plaintiffs:⁵ by this time our sexton hath reform'd⁶ Signior Leonato of the matter: and, masters, do not forget to specify, when time and place shall serve, that I am an ass.

VERGES.

Here, here comes master Signior Leonato, and the sexton too.

Enter LEONATO and ANTONIO, with the SEXTON.

LEONATO.

Which is the villain? let me see his eyes,
That, when I note another man like him,
I may avoid him: which of these is he?

BORACHIO.

If you would know your wronger, look on me.

LEONATO.

Art thou the slave that with thy breath hast kill'd
Mine innocent child?

¹ whiles: while.

² practice: carrying out.

³ composed and framed: made up and fashioned.

⁴ that I loved it first: in which I first fell in love with it.

⁵ plaintiffs: defendants.

⁶ reform'd: informed.

BORACHIO.

Yea, even I alone.

LEONATO.

No, not so, villain; thou beliest thyself:
Here stand a pair of honourable men,
A third is fled, that had a hand in it.—
I thank you, princes, for my daughter's death:
Record it with your high and worthy deeds;
'Twas bravely done, if you bethink you of it.¹

CLAUDIO.

I know not how to pray your patience;²
Yet I must speak. Choose your revenge yourself;
Impose me to³ what penance your invention⁴
Can lay upon my sin: yet sinn'd I not
But in mistaking.

DON PEDRO.

By my soul, nor I:
And yet, to satisfy this good old man,
I would bend under any heavy weight
That he'll enjoin me to.

LEONATO.

I cannot bid you bid my daughter live,—
That were impossible: but, I pray you both,
Possess⁵ the people in Messina here
How innocent she died; and if your love
Can labour aught in sad invention,⁶
Hang her an epitaph upon her tomb,
And sing it to her bones,—sing it to-night:—
To-morrow morning come you to my house;
And since you could not be my son-in-law,
Be yet my nephew: my brother hath a daughter,
Almost the copy of my child that's dead,

¹ bethink you of it: consider it.

² pray your patience: beg your indulgence.

³ Impose me to: impose on me.

⁴ invention: imagination.

⁵ Possess: inform.

⁶ invention: works of imagination.

And she alone is heir to both of us:
Give her the right you should have given her cousin,
And so dies my revenge.

CLAUDIO.

O noble sir,
Your over-kindness doth wring tears from me!
I do embrace your offer; and dispose¹
For henceforth of poor Claudio.

LEONATO.

To-morrow, then, I will expect your coming;
To-night I take my leave.—This naughty² man
Shall face to face be brought to Margaret,
Who I believe was packt³ in all this wrong,
Hired to it by your brother.

BORACHIO.

No, by my soul, she was not;
Nor knew not what she did when she spoke to me;
But always hath been just and virtuous
In any thing that I do know by her.⁴

DOGBERRY.

Moreover, sir (which indeed is not under white and black),⁵
this plaintiff here, the offender, did call me ass: I beseech you,
let it be remember'd in his punishment. And also, the watch
heard them talk of one Deform'd: they say he wears a key in
his ear, and a lock hanging by it; and borrows money in God's
name,⁶—the which he hath used⁷ so long and never paid, that
now men grow hard-hearted, and will lend nothing for God's
sake: pray you, examine him upon that point.

LEONATO.

I thank thee for thy care and honest pains.

¹ dispose: you may dispose. ² naughty: wicked. ³ packt: a confederate (one of the pack).
⁴ by her: about her. ⁵ under white and black: written down. ⁶ borrows money in God's name: i.e., begs alms in the name of charity. ⁷ hath used: he has been accustomed to doing.

DOGBERRY.

Your worship speaks like a most thankful and reverend youth;
and I praise God for you.

LEONATO.

There's for thy pains.

DOGBERRY.

God save the foundation! ¹

LEONATO.

Go, I discharge thee of thy prisoner, and I thank thee.

DOGBERRY.

I leave an arrant knave with your worship; which I beseech
your worship to correct yourself, for the example of others.
God keep your worship! I wish your worship well; God restore
you to health! I humbly give you leave to depart; and if a
merry meeting may be wisht, God prohibit ² it!—Come,
neighbour. [Exeunt DOGBERRY and VERGES.]

LEONATO.

Until to-morrow morning, lords, farewell.

ANTONIO.

Farewell, my lords: we look for you to-morrow.

DON PEDRO.

We will not fail.

CLAUDIO.

To-night I'll mourn with Hero.

[Exeunt DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO.]

LEONATO [to the WATCH].

Bring you these fellows on. We'll talk with Margaret,
How her acquaintance grew with this lewd ³ fellow.

[Exeunt severally.]

¹ the foundation: this noble house; usually said of a church or charitable organization.

² prohibit: permit; grant.

³ lewd: vile; base.

SCENE II.

LEONATO's garden.

Enter, severally,¹ BENEDICK and MARGARET.

BENEDICK.

Pray thee, sweet Mistress Margaret, deserve well at my hands by helping me to the speech of Beatrice.

MARGARET.

Will you, then, write me a sonnet in praise of my beauty?

BENEDICK.

In so high a style, Margaret, that no man living shall come over it;² for, in most comely truth, thou deservest it.

MARGARET.

To have no man come over me! why, shall I always keep below stairs?³

BENEDICK.

Thy wit is as quick as the greyhound's mouth,—it catches.

MARGARET.

And yours as blunt as the fencer's foils, which hit, but hurt not.

BENEDICK.

A most manly wit, Margaret; it will not hurt a woman: and so, I pray thee, call Beatrice: I give thee the bucklers.⁴

• MARGARET.

Give us the swords; we have bucklers of our own.

¹ *severally*: separately.

² *come over it*: top it.

³ *below stairs*: in the servants' quarters—and never be mistress of a house of my own.

⁴ *give thee the bucklers*: yield the victory to you.

BENEDICK.

If you use them, Margaret, you must put in the pikes¹ with a vice;² and they are dangerous weapons for maids.

MARGARET.

Well, I will call Beatrice to you, who I think hath legs.

BENEDICK.

And therefore will come.

[Exit MARGARET.

[He sings.

The god of love,
That sits above,
And knows me, and knows me,
How pitiful I deserve,—

I mean in singing; but in loving,—Leander³ the good swimmer, Troilus⁴ the first employer of pandars,⁵ and a whole book full of these quondam⁶ carpet-mongers,⁷ whose names yet run smoothly in the even road of a blank verse,—why, they were never so truly turn'd over and over as my poor self in love. Marry, I cannot show it in rime; I have tried: I can find out no rime to 'lady' but 'baby,'—an innocent⁸ rime; for 'scorn,' 'horn,'—a hard rime; for 'school,' 'fool,'—a babbling rime; very ominous endings: no, I was not born under a riming planet, nor I cannot woo in festival terms.⁹

Enter BEATRICE.

Sweet Beatrice, wouldst thou come when I call'd thee?

BEATRICE.

Yea, signior, and depart when you bid me.

BENEDICK.

O, stay but till then!

¹ pikes: spikes in the center of the bucklers. ² vice: screw.
³ Leander: the lover of Hero who swam the Hellespont each night to visit her. ⁴ Troilus: Troilus was helped in his wooing of Cressida by her uncle, Pandarus, who thus gave his name to the word "pander." ⁵ pandars: panders. ⁶ quondam: onetime. ⁷ carpet-mongers: carpet knights; effeminate gallants. ⁸ innocent: silly.
⁹ festival terms: as distinguished from everyday language.

BEATRICE.

'Then' is spoken; fare you well now:—and yet, ere I go, let me go with that I came;¹ which is, with knowing what hath past between you and Claudio.

BENEDICK.

Only foul words; and thereupon I will kiss thee.

BEATRICE.

Foul words is but foul wind, and foul wind is but foul breath, and foul breath is noisome; therefore I will depart unkist.

BENEDICK.

Thou hast frightened the word out of his right sense, so forcible is thy wit. But I must tell thee plainly, Claudio undergoes² my challenge; and either I must shortly hear from him, or I will subscribe him³ a coward. And, I pray thee now, tell me for which of my bad parts didst thou first fall in love with me?

BEATRICE.

For them all together; which maintain'd so politic a state of evil,⁴ that they will not admit any good part to intermingle with them. But for which of my good parts did you first suffer love for me?

BENEDICK.

Suffer love,—a good epithet! I do suffer love indeed, for I love thee against my will.

BEATRICE.

In spite of your heart, I think; alas, poor heart! If you spite it for my sake, I will spite it for yours; for I will never love that which my friend hates.

BENEDICK.

Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably.

¹ that I came: what I came for.

² undergoes: is liable to.

³ subscribe him: write him down.

⁴ so politic a state of evil: such an ingeniously contrived state of evil.

BEATRICE.

It appears not in this confession: there's not one wise man among twenty that will praise himself.

BENEDICK.

An old, an old instance,¹ Beatrice, that lived in the time of good neighbours.² If a man do not erect in this age his own tomb ere he dies, he shall live no longer in monument than the bell rings and the widow weeps.

BEATRICE.

And how long is that, think you?

BENEDICK.

Question:³—why, an hour in clamour,⁴ and a quarter in rheum:⁵ therefore is it most expedient for the wise, if Don Worm,⁶ his conscience, find no impediment to the contrary, to be the trumpet of his own virtues, as I am to myself. So much for praising myself, who, I myself will bear witness, is praiseworthy: and now tell me, how doth your cousin?

BEATRICE.

Very ill.

BENEDICK.

And how do you?

BEATRICE.

Very ill too.

BENEDICK.

Serve God, love me, and mend. There will I leave you too, for here comes one in haste.

Enter URSULA.

URSULA.

Madam, you must come to your uncle. Yonder's old coil⁷ at home: it is proved my Lady Hero hath been falsely accused,

¹ instance: example. ² lived . . . good neighbors: existed in long-ago times, when neighbors would praise you and you didn't have to praise yourself. ³ Question: that is the question. ⁴ in clamour: in lamentation. ⁵ rheum: tears. ⁶ Don Worm: in Shakespeare's day, conscience was always represented as a worm. ⁷ old coil: a great to-do or commotion.

the prince and Claudio mightily abused;¹ and Don John is the author of all, who is fled and gone. Will you come presently?

BEATRICE.

Will you go hear this news, signior?

BENEDICK.

I will live in thy heart, die in thy lap, and be buried in thy eyes; and moreover I will go with thee to thy uncle's.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

A church.

Enter DON PEDRO, CLAUDIO, and three or four with tapers.

CLAUDIO.

Is this the monument of Leonato?

ATTENDANT.

It is, my lord.

CLAUDIO [*reads from a scroll*].

Done to death by slanderous tongues
Was the Hero that here lies;
Death, in guerdon² of her wrongs,
Gives her fame which never dies.
So the life that died with shame
Lives in death with glorious fame.
Hang thou there upon the tomb,
Praising her when I am dumb.—

Now, music, sound, and sing your solemn hymn

¹ *abused*: deceived.

² *guerdon*: recompense; reward.

Song.

Pardon, goddess of the night,¹
 Those that slew thy virgin knight;²
 For the which, with songs of woe,
 Round about her tomb they go.
 Midnight, assist our moan;
 Help us to sigh and groan,
 Heavily, heavily;
 Graves, yawn, and yield your dead,
 Till death be uttered,
 Heavily, heavily.

CLAUDIO.

Now, unto thy bones good night!—
 Yearly will I do this rite.

DON PEDRO.

Good morrow, masters; put your torches out:
 The wolves³ have prey'd; and look, the gentle day,
 Before the wheels of Phœbus,⁴ round about
 Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.
 Thanks to you all, and leave us: fare you well.

CLAUDIO.

Good morrow, masters: each his several⁵ way.

DON PEDRO.

Come, let us hence, and put on other weeds;⁶
 And then to Leonato's we will go.

CLAUDIO.

And Hymen⁷ now with luckier issue speed's⁸
 Than this for whom we render'd up this woe!⁹

[Exeunt.]

¹ goddess of the night: Diana, the moon goddess. ² virgin knight: i.e., Hero. ³ wolves: always associated with the night. ⁴ Phœbus: the sun god, Phœbus Apollo. ⁵ several: separate. ⁶ weeds: garments; a word now used only in "widow's weeds." ⁷ Hymen: god of marriage. ⁸ speed's: speed us. ⁹ render'd up this woe: offered this woeful tribute.

SCENE IV.

A room in LEONATO's house.

Enter LEONATO, ANTONIO, BENEDICK, BEATRICE, MARGARET, URSULA, FRIAR FRANCIS, and HERO.

FRIAR FRANCIS.

Did I not tell you she was innocent?

LEONATO.

So are the prince and Claudio, who accused her
Upon¹ the error that you heard debated:
But Margaret was in some fault for² this,
Although against her will,³ as it appears
In the true course of all the question.⁴

ANTONIO.

Well, I am glad that all things sort so well.⁵

BENEDICK.

And so am I, being else by faith enforced⁶
To call young Claudio to a reckoning for it.

LEONATO.

Well, daughter, and you gentlewomen all,
Withdraw into a chamber by yourselves,
And when I send for you, come hither maskt:
The prince and Claudio promised by this hour
To visit me.—You know your office, brother:

[*Exeunt LADIES.*]

You must be father to your brother's daughter,
And give her to young Claudio.

ANTONIO.

Which I will do with confirm'd countenance.⁷

BENEDICK.

Friar, I must entreat your pains, I think.

FRIAR FRANCIS.

To do what, signior?

¹ Upon: on account of. ² for: as for. ³ will: intention. ⁴ question: inquiry. ⁵ sort so well: turn out so well. ⁶ by faith enforced: obliged on my honor. ⁷ confirm'd countenance: with a straight face.

BENEDICK.

To bind me, or undo me; one of them.—
Signior Leonato, truth it is, good signior,
Your niece regards me with an eye of favour.

LEONATO.

That eye my daughter lent her: 'tis most true.

BENEDICK.

And I do with an eye of love requite her.

LEONATO.

The sight whereof I think you had from me,
From Claudio, and the prince: but what's your will?

BENEDICK.

Your answer, sir, is enigmatical:
But, for my will, my will is, your good-will
May stand ¹ with ours, this day to be conjoin'd
In the state of honourable marriage:—
In which, good friar, I shall desire your help.

LEONATO.

My heart is with your liking.

FRIAR FRANCIS.

And my help.—

Here comes the prince and Claudio.

Enter DON PEDRO and CLAUDIO, with ATTENDANTS.

DON PEDRO.

Good morrow to this fair assembly.

LEONATO.

Good morrow, prince; good morrow, Claudio:
We here attend you.² Are you yet³ determined
To-day to marry with my brother's daughter?

CLAUDIO.

I'll hold my mind, were she an Ethiop.⁴

¹ stand: agree.

² attend you: await you.

³ yet: still.

⁴ Ethiop: Ethiopian.

LEONATO.

Call her forth, brother; here's the friar ready.

[Exit ANTONIO.]

DON PEDRO.

Good morrow, Benedick. Why, what's the matter,
That you have such a February face,
So full of frost, of storm, and cloudiness?

CLAUDIO.

I think he thinks upon the savage bull.—
Tush, fear not, man; we'll tip thy horns with gold,
And all Europa shall rejoice at thee;
As once Europa did at lusty Jove,
When he would play the noble beast in love.¹

BENEDICK.

Bull Jove, sir, had an amiable low;
And some such strange bull leapt your father's cow,
And got a calf in that same noble feat
Much like to you, for you have just his bleat.

CLAUDIO.

For this I owe you:² here come other reck'nings.³

Enter ANTONIO, with the LADIES maskt.

Which is the lady I must seize upon?

ANTONIO.

This same is she, and I do give you her.

CLAUDIO.

Why, then she's mine.—Sweet, let me see your face.

LEONATO.

No, that you shall not, till you take her hand
Before this friar, and swear to marry her.

CLAUDIO.

Give me your hand before this holy friar:
I am your husband, if you like of me.

¹ play the noble beast in love: an allusion to Jove's disguising himself as a bull to abduct Europa.

² I owe you: I shall have to pay you back later.

³ reck'nings: matters to be reckoned with.

HERO.

And when I lived, I was your other wife: [Unmasking.
And when you loved, you were my other husband.

CLAUDIO.

Another Hero!

HERO.

Nothing certainer:
One Hero died defiled; but I do live,
And surely as I live, I am a maid.

DON PEDRO.

The former Hero! Here that is dead!

LEONATO.

She died, my lord, but whiles¹ her slander lived.

FRIAR FRANCIS.

All this amazement can I qualify;²
When after that the holy rites are ended,
I'll tell you largely³ of fair Hero's death:
Meantime let wonder seem familiar,⁴
And to the chapel let us presently.

BENEDICK.

Soft and fair,⁵ friar.—Which is Beatrice?

BEATRICE [unmasking].

I answer to that name. What is your will?

BENEDICK.

Do not you love me?

BEATRICE.

Why, no; no more than reason.

BENEDICK.

Why, then your uncle, and the prince, and Claudio
Have been deceived; for they swore you did.

¹ but whiles: only while.

² qualify: moderate.

³ largely: in detail.

⁴ let wonder seem familiar: treat this all as a commonplace occurrence.

⁵ Soft and fair: softly and smoothly.

BEATRICE.

Do not you love me?

BENEDICK.

Troth,¹ no; no more than reason.

BEATRICE.

Why, then my cousin, Margaret, and Ursula
Are much deceived; for they did swear you did.

BENEDICK.

They swore that you were almost sick for me.

BEATRICE.

They swore that you were well-nigh dead for me.

BENEDICK.

'Tis no such matter.²—Then you do not love me?

BEATRICE.

No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

LEONATO.

Come, cousin, I am sure you love the gentleman.

CLAUDIO.

And I'll be sworn upon't that he loves her;
For here's a paper, written in his hand,
A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,
Fashion'd to Beatrice.

HERO.

And here's another,
Writ in my cousin's hand, stol'n from her pocket,
Containing her affection unto³ Benedick.

BENEDICK.

A miracle! here's our own hands against our hearts.—Come,
I will have thee; but, by this light, I take thee for pity.⁴

BEATRICE.

I would not deny you;—but, by this good day, I yield upon
great persuasion; and partly to save your life, for I was told

¹ Troth: in truth.

² 'Tis no such matter: it isn't true.

³ affection unto: love for.

⁴ for pity: through compassion.

you were in a consumption.

BENEDICK.

Peace! I will stop your mouth.

[Kissing her.]

DON PEDRO.

How dost thou, Benedick, the married man?

BENEDICK.

I'll tell thee what, prince; a college of wit-crackers¹ cannot flout² me out of my humour.³ Dost thou think I care for a satire or an epigram? No: if a man will be beaten with brains,⁴ a' shall wear nothing handsome about him. In brief, since I do purpose to marry, I will think nothing to any purpose that the world can say against it; and therefore never flout at me for what I have said against it; for man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion.⁵—For thy part, Claudio, I did think to have beaten thee; but in that⁶ thou art like to be my kinsman, live unbruised, and love my cousin.

CLAUDIO.

I had well hoped thou wouldst have denied Beatrice, that I might have cudgell'd thee out of thy single life, to make thee a double-dealer;⁷ which, out of question,⁸ thou wilt be, if my cousin do not look exceeding narrowly to thee.⁹

BENEDICK.

Come, come, we are friends.—Let's have a dance ere we are married, that we may lighten our own hearts and our wives' heels.

LEONATO.

We'll have dancing afterward.

BENEDICK.

First, of my word;¹⁰ therefore play, music!—

¹ wit-crackers: wisecrackers. ² flout: jeer. ³ humour: inclination.
⁴ will be beaten with brains: i.e., will allow himself to be mocked.
⁵ conclusion: final decision. ⁶ in that: inasmuch as. ⁷ double-dealer: unfaithful person. ⁸ out of question: unquestionably.
⁹ look . . . thee: watch you very closely. ¹⁰ of my word: upon my word.

Prince, thou art sad; get thee a wife, get thee a wife: there is no staff¹ more reverend than one tipt with horn.²

Enter a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

My lord, your brother John is ta'en in flight,
And brought with³ armed men back to Messina.

BENEDICK.

Think not on him till to-morrow: I'll devise thee brave⁴ punishments for him. Strike up, pipers! *[Dance. Exeunt.]*

¹ **staff**: walking stick, carried by older people.

² **tipt . . . horn**: another of Shakespeare's many allusions to cuckolds.

³ **with**: by.

⁴ **brave**: fitting (ironic).

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